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Official Magazine - UK

Issue 023 October 2008 £5.99
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EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

Will it hammer PES this year?
Get the final score now

Mercenaries 2

Explosive world first review inside



Street Fighter Special

Stay down, Ken!
14 pages of fist-
on-face love

Hands-on with the awesome Heavy Rain
DIY music with the new Guitar Hero
Fight crime with Batman in DC Universe Online
...and the weirdest diseases on PlayStation



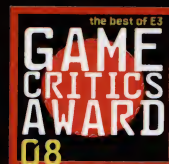
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Welcome



Brilliance undone by idiocy. Not the first line of my CV, but a summation of my feelings towards FIFA over the years, having started playing in '93 with FIFA International Soccer on Mega Drive. 'Look at the amazing isometric graphics! Football will never be the... Oh, so you can score every time just by standing in front of the keeper as he takes a goal kick. Great.'

And so it went. Ever more impressive presentation and licensing let down by terminally average gameplay and gimmicky features. (Remember when there was a 'Joey Barton' button combination for elbowing players? There's a special kind of stupid.) So, after discovering Pro Evo on PS2, there was absolutely no going back.

Until now. Because the balance may be about to change again. Having sucked up all the bitter criticism, EA finally seems to have nailed what we wanted in the first place: a game that *feels* like football, with all the flash stuff as an added bonus. And with ten vs ten online play and the genuinely brilliant Be A Pro Mode, the series is innovating too. Who would've thought it? Next month: Little Big Planet!

Tim Clark Editor

tim.clark@futurenet.co.uk

COVER REVIEW

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82
FIFA 09

Has it done enough to be our top scoring football game? Get the full-time report now.

FEATURES



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Dr PlayStation is in, and the diagnosis isn't good as we examine gaming's most virulent illnesses.



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Hideo Kojima, creator of Metal Gear Solid, talks pressure, cut-scenes and his future.



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An exclusive look behind the scenes at Sony's massively multiplayer superhero game

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Ratchet's mini-PSN adventure turns out to be nautical but nice.

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Celebrating the none-more-strong series.



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Who we are...



Tim Clark
Editor

Spent half of the issue bothering wildlife in Africa. Named one impressively-equipped Lion 'ballsy'.

Game of the moment
Soulcalibur IV
Fave Street Fighter
Vega



Ben Wilson
Deputy editor

Now so obsessed with Wall-E that his desk is covered with rubbish to try and lure himself a robot.

Game of the moment
Madden NFL 09
Fave Street Fighter
Ryu



Leon Hurley
Commissioning editor

Now avoiding spoilers by keeping eyes shut and fingers in ears at all times.

Game of the moment
Race Driver Grid
Fave Street Fighter
Chun-Li



Rachel Weber
Agenda editor

Ratchet's impending hen do could be ruined by the inability to source a Kratos-themed stripper.

Game of the moment
R&C: Quest For Booty
Fave Street Fighter
Blanka



Nathan Ditum
Reviews editor

Played through the pain barrier for our five-a-side team while nursing a long list of phantom injuries.

Game of the moment
Soulcalibur IV
Fave Street Fighter
Sagat



Helen Woodey
Operations editor

Reduced to eating 'cupboard surprise' all month after financial irregularities at home.

Game of the moment
Buzz! Quiz TV
Fave Street Fighter
E. Honda

Write to the team at opm@futurenet.co.uk

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Official Magazine - UK

On your disc



Stop talking at the back! Welcome to OPM's school of games, where you can get a GCSE in strafing and an A level in, uh, headshots. Today's lesson comes in the form of a new demo disc, with three fresh demos for you to learn and 20 from the school library. Learn to master special powers and big hair with Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit, then don't be late for alien annihilation 101 with Enemy Territory: Quake Wars. Our last lesson for the day is PE, where we'll be practising our grenade throws and cover skills with shooter Battlefield: Bad Company. Forgot your kit again? Hard luck – you'll be playing it in your pants and vest then.



Switch your PS3 on, find the Game icon on the XMB bar and then select 'OPSM - UK Blu-ray Demo 2008/23'.



Battlefield: Bad Company

Joining B Company isn't about being a hero, it's about blowing things up and getting rich. This demo is your chance to commandeer a vehicle and head out on a search and destroy mission with your new squad mates.

This month's exclusive highlights...



Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

Work on your people skills and co-operate with your teammates to crush the Strogg and complete your mission.



Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit

Hang on to your spirit balls and try your hand at some anime brawling with these two matches.



Haze

Try a little Nectar and get a taste of jungle warfare in the shooter that's all about performance enhancing drugs.



Race Driver Grid

Like racing in the DeLorean. Compete in tournaments and demolition derbies, and don't forget to abuse the time-travelling flashback feature.



What if my disc doesn't work?

If it definitely doesn't work, send the disc to 'Disc Returns, OPM, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW' and we'll replace it. You can also email questions to opm@futurenet.co.uk. Please put 'Disc' in the subject line.

Also on the disc this month Guitar Hero: Aerosmith, Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Conspiracy, Overlord: Rising Hell, Lost Planet: Extreme Condition, UEFA Euro 2008, SEGA Superstars Tennis, Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction, Sega Rally, Burnout Paradise, Skate, Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, Devil May Cry 4, MX Vs ATV Untamed, Pro Evolution Soccer 2008, Stuntman: Ignition, Super Rub'a'dub, Folklore, Virtua Tennis 3



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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about...

Guitar Hero songmaking

We go mixing in the studio.

► **Page 16**



Resident Evil's new girl

Meet the real Sheva Alomar.

► **Page 18**



Kratos in Soulcalibur

As made by us.

► **Page 20**



Wipeout HD delay

Why you'll have to wait for the racer's big return.

► **Page 22**



Uncharted interview

Lead designer talks Trophies.

► **Page 24**



1 Sony's amazing exclusive

Heavy Rain is only on PS3, and set to redefine this generation of gaming...



"Videogames are like porn movies: you have a little bit of – usually nonsense – story that introduces the action. It's time to move on." So says David Cage, founder of Quantic Dream, the Parisian developer who spawned the outstanding *Fahrenheit*, and the man whose definition of 'moving on' could turn out to be something very special indeed. It's a digital novel where, effectively, you write every single word. It's coming to PS3. And it's called *Heavy Rain*.

Described as a 'psychological thriller', the game tells the story of six characters. They're currently nameless, but we played a specially created episode using a pretty young female journalist who's on the trail of

a suspected serial killer. It felt like a pilot for a new TV series, only we're taking part instead of watching.

Murder trail

It begins with our girl heading towards the suspected killer's house on her motorbike. It's raining, and when she takes off her helmet you see the water falling on her cheeks. Seriously: it's beyond beautiful. The bike stops in a typical residential area of an American city. She looks around, shifting her head – which you can freely move with the left analogue stick – and walks towards the door. You can ring the bell, knock on the door, or simply sneak in the backyard and try to enter through a window.

We go for the window and start exploring the house, discovering that we can interact with almost every object inside. Upstairs, we're greeted by a narrow corridor with doors on the sides: we enter the first on the left and discover a lab. The owner of this house sure likes to stuff animals... odd. The camera closes in on the eyes of our heroine. She's scared. We're a little weirded out too. The emotions on her face and the way she nervously looks around are some of the best acting yet seen in a videogame. Yes, it sounds like a cliché. But that doesn't make it any less true.

Suddenly, a terrifying discovery confirms that this definitely *is* the serial killer's home: his bedroom is ►

Quantic who?

Heavy Rain developer Quantic Dream released its first game, *Omikron: The Nomad Soul*, on PC and Dreamcast in 1999, but is most famous for PC and PS2 game *Fahrenheit*, a paranormal thriller featuring branching storylines in which you investigate a series of murders in New York. Weird fact: Founder David Cage's real name is actually David De Gruttola, and he's a professional musician by trade.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



**EXCLUSIVE
SHOTS**
PlayStation
Critical Response UK

■ The visuals are so lifelike it's sometimes eerie. Check out the rain on our gal's face.

014



■ Choose to fend off the serial killer in a variety of ways, or let the girl die. Wait, what?

adorned with stuffed girls. There's one eerily smiling in the bed, another sitting on the sofa, another sort of serving coffee. As soon as we discover the corpses, the game shows the owner opening the door. Time to act quick and escape, and what happens next is really what Heavy Rain is all about. First we try to sneak past him, while he's watching the TV. This is done by going around the stairs and opening, *very slowly*, the door to the garage.

Before we can get any further (booooo!) the man demoing the game suggests finding out what would happen if we acted differently. This time, as soon as we uncover the

corpses, we hide inside a wardrobe. Sir Kill'n'stuff walks upstairs and as soon as he walks by, we dash out past him. A chase begins, during which the game continually asks us to make a decision. Do we want to try the door to the garage (similar to our original exit route), or go directly to the main door? We opt for the latter, but our lady is caught and ends up in a short fight with our psychotic friend, during which you have to smash the buttons to free yourself.

Freedom reigns

Once free, we frantically run her down a set of stairs, and at one point she stumbles and leans against the wall to maintain her balance. (An example of Cage's revelation that character movements and animations depend on their mental status, and the situation they're in.) You still have full control of her movements: if you leave her leaning on the wall the attacker will pounce again; if you keep running, the camera shakes violently to hammer home the terror of the situation. It's like you're directing and starring in a



Dev talk

"Sandbox is saying, 'Look, there are tools. There are things. Maybe there will be friends. Maybe not. Do what you want.'"

David Cage
Founder, Quantic Dream

movie: if you think the scene would look better with the heroine meeting a gruesome demise, you can simply let it play out that way.

This time, we managed to make it out. We could have called the police, escaped through the window, or kept fighting until one of us was killed, with each action leading to a different event in the game. If your character dies the game simply continues onwards, letting you take control of one of the other characters instead. We're already in love with the total open-endedness of it. Cage and his team are trying to raise the bar as far as narrative experience is concerned, and the initial results are impressive. The only downside? You'll have to wait until sometime next year before you can sample it for yourself.

We'll have more on Heavy Rain next month. Check out quanticdream.com for the developer's latest news.



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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

2

Making music in new Guitar Hero

How we recreated The White Stripes' Seven Nation Army

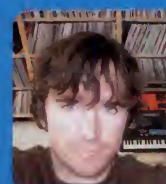


To clarify, that's writing, sequencing and recording our own version of Seven Nation Army from scratch. Then playing it in-game. We knew Guitar Hero World Tour's mysterious studio would enable *some* creativity, but not how much – until now. The answer is: a lot. An afternoon of recording and editing has revealed a fully functioning music suite.

"And... rolling"

The main area is the GHStudio. Here you can use pre-sampled guitars, kits and effects to create your own track. You can use Guitar Hero's guitars and drums to record with (or do it all using the guitar if you don't have a kit). Or you can plug in four controllers – lead, rhythm, bass and drums – to get the whole band on virtual tape. The GHMix utility then enables you to edit, sequence and polish your song, which can then be uploaded online to GHTunes to share. Developer Neversoft hopes to create a big community, with recommendations and music from famous acts.

Overall the functionality is on par with professional packages like Reason, Sonic or Acid Pro – which would set you back hundreds of pounds. There's no audio recording – so no rude version of Atomic Kitten's Whole Again – but the range of instruments and effects still makes this an amazing tool. The game is due out October, when the internet will doubtless be awash with lo-fi punk epics.



Dev talk

"GHTunes is the Youtube of GH. People can create their own songs and share them online. You can play them singularly or as a band."

Brian Bright
Project director, Neversoft

1 Prepare your axe

Playing your guitar or drum kit will trigger the instrument you've selected. Choose between pre-set scales like Major, Minor or Pentatonic, or create your own, assigning custom notes to each button (or pad, if you're using drums). You can also play 'open' notes on the guitar by strumming with no fret button, which extends the range.

LEAD MACHINE

Frets: Play
Whammy: Type
Slide: Augment
Type: Down



LEAD INSANE LEAD

Frets: Play
Whammy: Type
Slide: Augment
Type: Down

LINE 6

INDIE ROCK
POD

AMP SMALL TWEED

FX NONE

CAB TWEED 1x12

UNLOCK

LEAD INSANE LEAD

DRUMS Heavy Rock

Percussion Off

New Song

3 Select for effect

Guitar Hero has a deal with Line 6 meaning that its Pod range will feature in the game. In the real world they're a range of home studio multi-effects for guitar and bass. In GHStudio it means you can access loads of varied guitar noises – everything from crunchy distortion to screaming lead tones. You can vary things like effect, amp and cab to create your own sound, too.



2 Go for a take

Press **SELECT** and **←** on the guitar to start recording. You'll hear a click track in the background to keep everything in time while what you play on the guitar appears as a line in the recording window. There are four tracks, one for each instrument – lead guitar, rhythm guitar, bass and drums. You can either record each one separately or any combination of multiple instruments simultaneously.



4 In the mix

Once you've recorded your masterpiece, any sloppy playing can be fixed in GHMix. Here you can quantise notes – shifting them around if they're out of time – and cut, copy and paste sections to create whole songs out of a few bars. Once you're happy with your work you can save it and it'll appear in the main game as a playable track.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



3

Meet the *real* Sheva Alomar

OPM talks to Resi 5 babe Michelle Van Der Water



GTA gal

Much more than just a pretty face, it turns out Michelle is a bit of a GTA fan. "While I'm not very good at games, I have been fairly addicted to Grand Theft Auto since it came out," she says. "I love how realistic it is, being able to do everything you can't in real life and not suffer the consequences. It took me a while to get used to killing people, but now I'm pretty much over it and find it quite stress relieving."

Dismantle your Milla Jovovich shrine: Resident Evil has a new dream girl, and her name is Michelle Van Der Water. The exotic-sounding actress – who has a Dutch surname, was born in South Africa, grew up near Sydney in a small beach town called Stanwell Park and now lives in LA, having moved there five years ago – plays Sheva Alomar in Resi 5, the sidekick to lead character Chris Redfield.

Van Der Water beat out over 2000 hopefuls for the Resi gig, although initially she wasn't told which game she was auditioning for. "It was all very hush-hush," she tells OPM. "At the audition they gave me a gun and

said to point it at the video camera, as if I had just uncovered a drug bust and was about to start shooting people. As the improvisation played out, they would shout out things like 'angry face!', then 'sad face!' and 'smile when you shoot them!' About a week later I found out I got the job."

Friendly fire

To get Van Der Water's likeness into the game, the creators of Resident Evil 5 took photos of her from every conceivable angle, using all sorts of

different expressions. "They wanted an actress to portray 'real emotions', at one point being close to tears, at another filled with hate and revenge," she says. "They said these expressions would be super-imposed onto the animated character that was modelled from my face."

Having previously appeared in TV shows ER and One On One, the video to Outkast single Prototype, and a truckload of commercials, Van Der Water now wants to make the step up to the big screen – preferably by

"I hope they consider me for the role of Sheva in the movie."

following in Jovovich's footsteps and being cast in one of the Resi movies. "I sincerely hope I will be considered for the role of

Sheva for the movie, it would be an absolute privilege," she says, enthusiastically. "Hopefully they'll remember me when the time comes – and not just for my facial expressions. I am a big fan of sci-fi and would love to be portrayed as a heroine against evil, especially in Africa. I have trained in Shaolin Kung-Fu for two years and shot a lot of firearms in film – I want to put those skills back into practice soon!"

See more of Michelle and her past film and modelling work at michellevanderwater.com.



PS
019



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Cloud



Kratos



Dante

4

DIY guest stars in Soulcalibur IV

Make gaming celebs with the character creation mode

Green with envy?

If the screenshots that have recently popped up on the web showing Yoda and Darth Vader in battle got you all excited about a Star Wars showdown, we've got some bad news. The images led to speculation that the shrivelled Jedi will be part of the DLC package available for Soulcalibur IV later in the year, but the game's director Katsutoshi Sasaki recently said in an interview that, "There is no plan for that so far." Still, there's always Darth's secret apprentice. Sad smiley face.

Soulcalibur IV is played by two types of people. Those who are there for the savage beauty, precise flourishes and sheer speed of combat. And those who want to spend hours dressing outrageously busty ladies in pixie boots and fancy necklaces.

Using the extensive character creation system to whip up your ideal sword-wielding woman is one thing, but Soulcalibur super fans are using it to build celebrities. The menus let you tweak everything from shoes to fighting styles, so you can build a Megan Fox look-alike and then have her fight just like Mitsurugi.

Pictures flooding the web show everyone from Mystique to a Ronald McDonald that's enough to put you off Quarter Pounders for life (see below). The trend has even turned political in America, after a Calibur fan crafted a shirtless Barack Obama and a hammer-wielding John McCain and pit them against each other in the arena. You can see the video online at snipurl.com/3bo0z.

One I made earlier

Eager to add our own creations to the line-up, we made our own troupe of PlayStation stars, carefully moulding

Dante, Cloud and Kratos. Final Fantasy's Cloud ate up the most time – we spent a full hour trying to capture his boyish charms and flaxen hair – but the toughest subject by far was Kratos. The bald head and swollen pectoral muscles are spot on, but without a tattoo and body paint option he looks like the sort of man you wouldn't want to bunk with in prison, rather than a Spartan warrior. Next on our to do list is crafting the whole of team OPM, then holding a sudden death/sacking tournament.

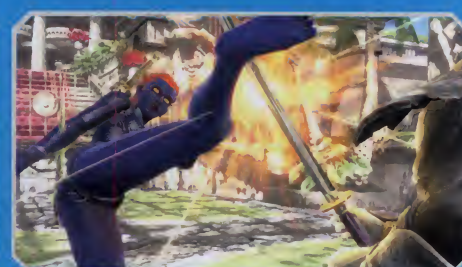
Stopped fighting long enough to recreate any famous faces? Send a pic to us at opm@futurenet.com.



■ Ronald McDonald uses his razor fingers to slice gherkins.



■ Uma Thurman stars in Kill Bill 3: Bikini Cowgirl.



■ Create X-Men's Mystique with more blue and fewer clothes.



5 The new Lara

Croydon girl becomes the new Croft

When you're trying to find a girl to play the part of blue-blooded, all-action PlayStation archaeologist Lara Croft at press events and game conventions, a receptionist/model from Croydon – not exactly the jewel in South London's crown – might not be top of the list. But Carroll is no ordinary receptionist. She's a trained gymnast and can be found on the books of MCS Agency, a PR group that represents Z-listers like Linda Lusardi and Diane Youdale – AKA Jet from Gladiators. Carroll will soon be promoting Tomb Raider Underworld at events all over the world, and says of her alter-ego: "Lara is strong, athletic, confident, and obviously very attractive."

A gymnast with 12 years experience, Carroll was given an early look at the game, due out 21 November, to study Lara's moves – and if her first photos are anything to go by she won't have any trouble recreating Lara's athletic style. To add to her credentials, she's embarking on SAS weapons and survival courses in Eastern Europe, and studying world archaeology. We can't imagine anyone will be quizzing her on Byzantine relics, but the combat stuff might come in handy when fending off the wilder element among Tomb Raider's notoriously obsessive fan base.

Croft prequels
The list of ladies who've played Lara is a sizeable one. Before an official model was nominated the role was filled by a young, pre-Peter Andre Katie Price. Since then, it has passed from model to model, stopping briefly with Domsday actress Rhona Mitra in 1997. Perhaps the most memorable though was Nell McAndrew, who was the first woman to be fired from Croft duty after posing for Playboy.

6

Wipeout HD re-tooled

New features confirmed amid
rumours of health issue delay



**EXCLUSIVE
ART**

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Series history

The first Wipeout was released in Europe in September 1995 alongside the newly launched PS1. Developed by Psygnosis – which would later become Sony's Liverpool Studio – with help from Sheffield art factory The Design Republic, it was the first game for the console to be produced outside of Japan, and sold over 1.5 million copies. Two sequels were released on PS1 – 2097 and Wipeout – before Wipeout Fusion emerged for PS2 in February 2002. Two PSP versions followed – Pure in September 2005 to coincide with the handheld's launch, and Pulse in December 2007.

The traditional way to announce that your highly anticipated game has been delayed is to nudge a sheepish press release under the door and take the phone off the hook. Which is absolutely not what Sony Europe president David Reeves did recently when he had this to say about the real reason for Wipeout HD's perpetual schedule-shunting: "There is a specific technical problem with Wipeout that we have to solve. I can't go into details but it is a really, really tricky technical problem that no region has been able to solve at the moment."

Nuts and bolts

Cue a frenzy of internet speculation, and reliable sources suggesting that Wipeout had failed epilepsy safety tests and was being significantly

redeveloped as a result. Whatever the actual reason behind the delay, what's certain is that the dev team at Sony's Liverpool Studio have used the time to polish the game's already gleaming chrome casing and throw in some extra features.

Spit and polish

We already knew that Wipeout HD would feature the very best tracks from handheld versions Pure and Pulse, with new ships and remodelled textures and lighting, and that it would run in soothing 1080p at 60 frames per second, with its thumping techno soundtrack delivered in Dolby 5.1.

It's now also been confirmed that the downloadable version of Sony's future racing classic will include eight new reverse tracks, four



Dev talk

"People should not underestimate the changes that 60fps and 1080p make. All the ships are new hi-res models. The game looks much richer."

Colin Berry
Lead designer, Sony

additional ships, and two alternative HUD setups. There will also be offline split-screen – just like back in the day of the original PS1 version – for those not yet sucked into the online abyss, and full support for PlayStation Trophies (we're already having nightmares about the inevitably impossible Zone mode Trophy). All of which has made us hotter for the game than ever, and happy to wait until it's done.

Wipeout HD's release date is now uncertain, but Sony hopes to have the game out before the end of the year.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



7 Uncharted man talks trophies

Lead designer Richard Lemarchand discusses Sony's new achievement-style system, and Drake's big twist

Naughty Dog bio

Uncharted was created by Naughty Dog, founded by Andy Gavin and Jason Rubin, who were former employees of顽皮狗 (Naughty Dog) in 1996. In 1996, the company became a first-party developer for Sony, following their contract with PS1 for Gran Turismo. Since then, the company has followed, before the launch of a new console, Jak and Daxter, to coincide with the arrival of PS2. Founded by Gavin and Rubin, Naughty Dog created another new franchise, Uncharted, for PS3 in 2007, and are rumored to be working on a sequel.

Why have you put Trophies in Uncharted? It must cost money that you won't make back?

It's a cool and interesting part of the increasingly important social aspect of gaming. On other existing gaming networks, people have been surprised by just how much gamers enjoy getting achievements and showing them off to mates and how it really enhances their experience and extends their playtime. People underestimated how powerful that would be. It excites me as a designer, because I can see all kinds of potential for leveraging it into play mechanics. I think Little Big Planet is going to be an awesome example of this. I can't wait to have my mates see the level I'm going to make, which will be very much my level – a bit different from my professional work.

You already had medals in Uncharted – did that make the Trophies easier?

It has. It's almost trivially easy, right down to the fact that we had 48 medals in the game and when we got the recommendations

from Sony about how many Trophies we should have, it was 48.

How much was Nathan Fillion from Firefly and Serenity an influence on Nathan Drake?

We're big fans of Firefly. We have a creative connection to it because the composer we use for Uncharted – Greg Edmonson – was the composer for the TV series. I think people who're interested in games storytelling are interested in the kind of long-form narrative that Joss Whedon does so well – telling stories across many episodes that build up to a big story. And the coolness of Nathan Fillion's character was definitely somewhere there in the mix, alongside Bruce Willis' character from Die Hard and, of course, Indiana Jones, and Brendan Fraser's character from the Mummy.

How do you feel about the paranormal stuff in the game?

We talked about it in every possible way you can imagine. We changed our approach to it over the course of the development. I think that we're still pretty happy with it, not everyone liked it but we were going for that flavour of the paranormal that you got from the

Dev bio

Richard Lemarchand joined Crystal Dynamics in the mid-'90s, where he worked on Soul Reaver with Uncharted director Amy Hennig. He moved to Naughty Dog at the end of production on 2004's Jak 3.

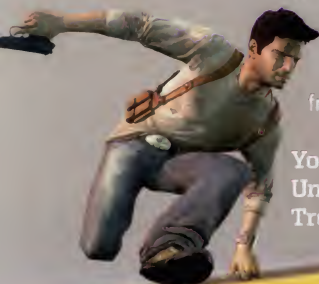


big reveal of the Ark at the end of Raiders, and we did want to keep it a mystery. We have our own ideas about what's going on with those creatures, but we wanted to shake the ground underneath the player at that point in the game, to keep the feeling of mystery, suspense and danger. We had a lot of different inspirations for it, and we discussed a lot about the right way to approach it. Hopefully time will judge it as a big success for us.

Is there anything you would change about the game?

We feel like we hit the mark pretty well with Uncharted, but there's always stuff we want to change. You always want to keep polishing. Leonardo Da Vinci once said that a work of art is never finished, only abandoned.

For the latest information on Trophy updates and patches, head to uk.playstation.com

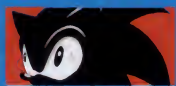




The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Casual



UK Resistance



Destructoid



Video Lamer



PS3 Fanboy



Siliconera



PlayStation Blog



The Sixth Axis



Fully Ramblomatic



David Jaffe Blog



MTV Multiplayer Blog



Joystiq



Peter Moore Blog



To The Game



Softpedia



Neogaf



Spong



QJ.net



VG Chartz



Gamekyo



Kotaku



PSX Extreme



VG Cats



Gamerankings



Wired Gaming

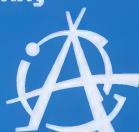


Level Up



Game Politics

Funny



Action Trip



Evil Avatar



Gay Gamer



Eurogamer



The Escapist



Ripten



Shacknews



Penny Arcade



CVG



Gamesradar

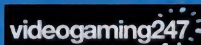


IGN



1Up

Factual



Videogaming 24/7



Moby Games



The Magic Box



3 Speech



Game Trailers



PlayStation Universe



Jolt Online



Gamefaqs



N4G



Edge Online



Gamedaily



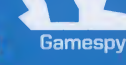
Gamasutra



MCV



Gamespot



Gamespy



Metacritic



Gamesindustry.biz

Corporate

8

The game sites that matter

We break down who does what on the worldwide web

9

Hands-on with PES

Konami looking to rebuild after transitional season

Whatever the fortunes of your real football team ("just buy *someone*, Arsene!") it's shaping up to be a cracking season on PS3. FIFA 09 is a huge leap forward – hit page 82 for the full review – and our first play of PES 2009 suggests it'll be pulling its rival's shirt all the way.

Despite all the talk from developer Shingo 'Seabass' Takatsuka that the new game has been re-worked from the ground up, PES 2009 is essentially last year's game with the glitches removed and far more robust gameplay in place. The most obvious tweak is that players feel stiffer and a touch slower, making the likes of Henry and Ronaldo less able to glide past every defender

like cheat characters. There's also a more natural feel to the shooting – fill the power bar and it feels like you're really drilling a shot – and, mercifully, no slowdown at all on the version we played – it's smooth like Spain's passing game.

Copycat tactics

There's no doubt, though, that the lack of a marquee new feature – like FIFA's ten vs ten online play – will disappoint some. Konami has added the 'Become A Legend' mode, in which you play through a career as a user-created player, being graded on performance and spending your salary on stat increases – but it feels like a carbon copy of FIFA's Be A Pro

mode. There are whispers of another new feature to be announced though, so watch this space.

On the licenses front, we're still waiting to hear which – if any – of the 'English League' (read: Premiership) teams will be licensed. The good news is that the comprehensive edit mode from the PS2 days has returned, so you can create your own sponsor logos and emblems. Clearly it'd be improper of us to suggest that dedicated forum users will most likely use this feature to give every unlicensed team in the game its proper kit, and then disseminate the save file online. So we won't.

Pro Evolution Soccer 2009 is due out in October. Keep an eye on konami.co.uk for updates.





The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

10

Do MMOs have a place on PS3?

Our experts bicker about online RPGs



Yes

Says eternal optimist and level 30 blood elf
Rachel Weber

■ Sony's spy-'em-up The Agency will be one of the first MMOs to arrive on PlayStation.

I have a dark secret. I might be a loyal PlayStation girl, but now and again I sneak off for some secret orc bothering on a PC MMO. 'Why?' you ask, when I could just load up Oblivion? Because I like fighting and hunting boar with other players, instead of just dead-eyed NPCs – and being called gay by a Texan 12-year-old in Call Of Duty 4 doesn't have quite the same sociable vibe. There's already a huge demand for online play on PS3; MMOs will just offer us a welcome alternative to deathmatches. Games like DC Universe Online will let me build superhero clans with my mates, explore Metropolis and hang out with Batman. And who doesn't want to do that?

Control freak

I'll admit most current PC MMOs wouldn't work on PS3, but only because even adjusting your armour means trawling through eight menus. There's no harm in simplifying that for Sixaxis. Does anyone really need 12 different fireball spells? Swap the complicated combat for real-time action and suddenly you don't need a whole keyboard just to punch a man. So forget the image of nerdy kids hunched over their mice, clicking themselves into early arthritis. With DC Universe Online and The Agency due out next year, plus a rumoured Star Wars MMO on the way, the genre isn't just going to have a place on PS3 – it's going to be huge.

Can't wait for MMOs to hit PS3? Then email us at opm@futurenet.co.uk, subject line: YES.



No

Says World Of Warcraft survivor and console fanboy
Nathan Ditum

It's easy to be mean about MMOs – look, I'm about to do it now. Basically, everything you've heard about them is true. They're boring at the start when all you can do is murder livestock and watch your stats grow at the speed of a starving plant. They're depressing in the middle when you realise all your colourful new friends are Scandinavian boys who want to sex your night elf huntress. And as a man who's spent weeks waddling over the plains of Azeroth as Dolg the adventuring dwarf warrior, take it from me that in the end, they're a terrifying and cosmically pointless waste of time.

Built for pleasure

But say a bit of your brain is missing (is that it on the floor? No, wait, don't touch that) and you want to play one anyway. Why would you do it on PS3? The Sixaxis is the ultimate evolution of gaming controllers – it's like the joystick version of the Alien, the perfect machine – but using it to play an MMO would be like using your TV remote to calibrate a space rocket. Any MMO worth playing has a complex array of abilities and spells, attacks and defences. What are you going to do on a pad: cycle through 30 options to find the one you want, then wait five minutes while your opponent does the same? It'd be like watching trees having a fist fight – calming, maybe, but not fun in any human sense.

Want to be kept as far away as possible from your console? E-mail opm@futurenet.co.uk, subject line: NO.

WELCOME HOME



FREE YOUR INNER SINNER

saintsrow.com



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So you want to be a record breaker...

Then talk to Twin Galaxies, official scorekeepers to the world of videogames

PlayStation news, views, happenings and people...

30 **Informer**

Hot game issues investigated by OPM's crack team.

32 **Culture**

The PlayStation people who make gaming great.

34 **Personal**

Hot opinion from those in the know.

35 **Tech**

Shiny things you can't live without.

36 **Sony**

New kit beamed down from the Sony mothership.

38 **Events**

Your gamer's guide to the month ahead.



■ In 1983 America's high-scoring gamers descended on Twin Galaxies for a Life magazine photo shoot.



"Taking nothing away from Olympians, I think playing videogames should be in the Olympics," says Dan Cunningham. "It takes a lot of self control to master a game." A bold statement maybe, but then the man in charge of verifying PS3 scores for Twin Galaxies – who supply them to the Guinness

Book Of Records – holds five world records. And when you're playing for six hours plus with no break, memorising every attack pattern and not going to the toilet, who's to say that breaking the 400,000 barrier on Fairyland Story isn't a bigger achievement than lobbing a javelin?

■ Walter Day founded Twin Galaxies after leaving his job in the oil business.

Not Walter Day. "Both endeavours require a high degree of mind-body co-ordination, lots of practice and conditioning," says the founder of Twin Galaxies, who worked as a songwriter and oil executive before opening his own arcade. In 1982, Time magazine carried a story about a 15-year-old who'd smashed the Defender world record on one of his cabinets – the day it was published, Day received more than a dozen calls from people claiming they could do better. When Defender-makers Williams said they weren't interested in recording scores, Day decided to do it himself... and Twin Galaxies was born. "There are a few





■ Twin Galaxies cult hero Steve Wiebe was the first person to reach over a million points on a Donkey Kong arcade machine.

scores that have been maxed out and can be equalled, but not beaten." Says Day, "However, I am most amazed by Abdner Ashman of Queens, NY, who played Jr Pac-Man in the arcade for six hours and finally broke the world record at midnight, February 2006. Then, with no rest, he walked over to the Robotron machine and played for six hours until, at six in the morning, he broke the long-standing Robotron record, too."

Film score

Not that it's all been plain sailing. In 2007, a documentary called *The King Of Kong* – which recorded the efforts of science teacher Steve Wiebe trying to beat Galaxies hero Billy Mitchell's Donkey Kong record – premiered in the US. It introduced a new audience to the devotion of top gamers, but also portrayed Mitchell as Machiavellian and the Galaxies scorekeepers as biased. There's a discussion of the film's selective editing at tinyurl.com/6fsb33, but Day isn't bitter: "The movie is brilliant. It has introduced many people to our organisation and helped us move forward. It does abuse the facts, however. Twin Galaxies fully embraces both Steve Wiebe and Billy Mitchell. They are our two biggest superstars."

Fancy a go at breaking a record? Well, not too many PS3 records have been verified so far – the most popular game is *Guitar Hero III* – so there's a good chance of getting into the record books. You'll probably see your score smashed in minutes, but you'll be a part of history, says Day. "Twin Galaxies believes that there have been about 100,000 games produced so far. It is Twin Galaxies' goal to establish the rules on every one of these games and then verify the world records on each, so, in the end, we can crown the champion on all 100,000 games. This will be our gift to the future. I believe that the gamers of the future will revere all the superstars of this era as the pioneers of the history of gaming."

RUMOUR MACHINE

Insider whispers

Spielberg's Wii puzzler *Boom Blox* will soon be making the leap to PlayStation formats.



The next *Medal Of Honor*, subtitled *Operation Anaconda*, will be set in Afghanistan in the year 2002.



Magpie-eyed gamers rejoice: Sony's shiny Trophies aren't just for PS3 – they're coming to PSP too.

Sega is doing a new *Jet Set Radio*, its roller-bladed/cel-shaded graf game.

In your face Xbox Live! Bizarre Creation's super successful space shooter *Geometry Wars* is defecting to PSN.



Leaked shots of an apparently next generation PSP reveal a built-in microphone.

Kingdom Hearts III is currently in development as a PS3 exclusive and will be announced at TGS.



It's getting hot in here

Super fan gets fired up for Pyro

Masquerade

Creator Tingle bought the mask from an 'adult' shop, and is looking to sell it on. It's not the sort of thing we'd want hanging around in our wardrobe either.

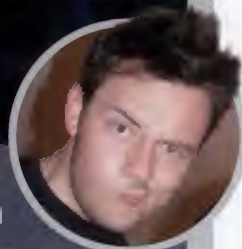
Tanked

Pyro's backpack, flamethrower and grenades were made from a mix of lightweight plastic and household objects.

Gas mask, rubber gloves, crimson jumpsuit, Pyro is one of the most recognisable Team Fortress 2 characters. "I wanted to make the most lethal and strange looking videogame character I've ever seen," explains man behind the mask, 21-year-old gamer and entrepreneur Paul Tingle. He's a regular cosplayer and made the outfit for a convention.

"The girls loved it!" It did have drawbacks though: "By the end of the day, my boots and gloves were full of sweat."

The suit was custom made, and he got the boots and gloves from a hardware shop. The mask, however, was from what Tingle coyly refers to as an 'adult products' store. Shredded credit card bills aside, he told us that the hardest part to make was Pyro's backpack. "It wasn't easy to make a gas tank with an oxygen outlet, grenades and a bandolier out of materials found around the home!" We think it was well worth every minute spent sewing, crafting and hanging around in sex shops.





WHO SAID THAT?

V.I.P. quotes

Mark Wahlberg



didn't play the Max Payne game for his movie role due to his "addictive personality".

Spider-Man creator **Stan Lee** tells Comic-Con, games have "gone beyond movies".



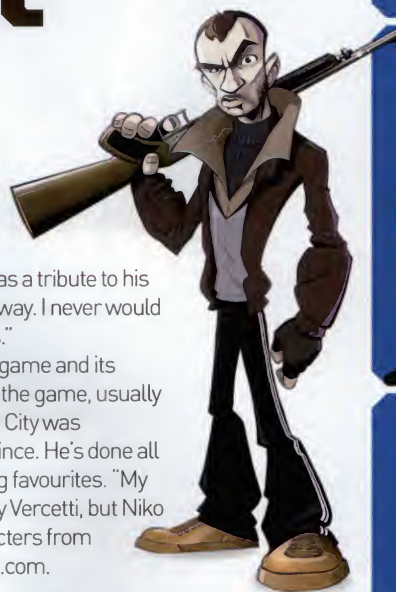
Grand Theft Artwork

Crime series inspires art attack

Grand Theft Auto isn't often credited for its positive pro-education message, but the series certainly had an inspirational effect on Patrick Brown. He's the 22-year-old Australian who created this amazing fan art as a tribute to his favourite games. "I love the art in all the GTA games. It inspired me all the way. I never would be at the stage I am if I didn't see the fantastic art of the series."



"GTA III was the trigger for all this," he told us. "I loved that game and its artwork so much that I just had to start drawing things from the game, usually the main character, Claude." His work went digital when Vice City was released, and he's been using his computer for his art ever since. He's done all the big names from the series, but Brown admits to having favourites. "My all-time favourite GTA character would have to be Tommy Vercetti, but Niko Bellic is close." Check out his work, also featuring characters from Hitman, Scarface and X-Men at patrickbrown.deviantart.com.



Gary Oldman lets it slip that has seen "a tiny little piece" of the so far unconfirmed Dark Knight videogame.



"Ghostbusters will be published. That's all I can say at the moment." Terminal Reality's Mark Randel puts his fingers in his ears and pretends everything is rosy.

OPM HOT TOPIC

Who is the best videogame sidekick?



Loz Doyle

Producer, Travellers Tales

"It has to be Dog out of Half-Life 2. Barely a sidekick, but what an awesome character."



Derek Littlewood

Project Lead, Free Radical
"Strange-faced developer Rob Yescombe, the Robin to my Batman (in the sense that he likes wearing tights) during our months promoting Haze."



David Polfeldt

Vice president, Massive Entertainment

"Mr Shimizu, the young captain of my PES team, is an awesome dude. Great footballer, great character. He's my own sidekick!"



George Wright

Assistant producer, Eldos

"Alyx Vance from Half-Life 2. She has talent with computers and guns... what more could you want?"





No turning back

Why every game is a one-shot deal for Leon Hurley

Anything I play on my PS3, I can only enjoy once, then it's over. No matter how much I loved it, no matter how much it rocked my world, it's dead to me the second the credits roll. The reason's simple: I'm all about the story – I want the wonder of discovering new and unseen things. I want to explore. And, once I have, I can never go back. What's the point? I've already seen it.

Case in point (spoiler warning): playing out Sergeant Jackson's death in *Call Of Duty 4* is probably the single most exciting and affecting game experience I've ever had. I didn't know it was coming and it floored me. It's impossible to re-experience something like that. I can still appreciate it second time around but that first, open-mouthed moment only comes once. That's what matters. High scores are meaningless. Unlockables and secret items don't hold my interest – I'll Youtube 'em later. For me it's all

SPOILER WARNING
PlayStation.
Official Magazine UK

discovery was gone and, with it, my interest in playing. I still load it up occasionally, and wander, like an old warrior, lost in the past and revisiting the sites of battles long since fought.

That's why I'm deadly serious about spoilers. Ed Tim made a comment in his issue 21 *GTA Personal* about "fully-grown adults (me) clamping hands over their ears" to avoid hearing critical plot info. Too. Bloody. Right.

✓ Toasting imps is fun, but only the first time.



"Spilling plot info is like stealing a moment."

about how it makes you feel, something that requires going in cold. Now, with Trophies here, I'm wondering if I can really replay something just to eke out its rewards. Truthful answer? Maybe, but God it'll feel like a chore.

I didn't play *Oblivion* because I love elves, chain mail or conversations about Mud Crabs. I played it because there was a whole world to explore. A huge unknown to devour. And I did, ravenously and unashamedly for 300 hours. After finishing nearly every mission and expansion pack I was so in love with what I'd experienced that, desperate for more, I tried playing it again with a new character. But the mystery was gone. I knew what I was going to find in Bruma. The hills to the east no longer held any mystery and the Blackwood Company's dark secret was out. The point of playing had disappeared: I knew everything that was coming. The sense of

If someone lets slip an essential bit of info, it's not just ruining the surprise, it's utterly killing a moment I'll then never experience. The response or reaction I might have had is gone. It's stealing something from me that I'll never get back. I can thank reviews ed Nathan for ruining *Uncharted's* pivotal twist by saying how surprised he was when "it went all Descent at the end". Thanks. Thanks a lot. I've seen the movie. I can guess what that means. What should have been an "Oh my God" moment of epic proportions was ruined before I even touched the pad. Oh look, monsters. Yawn.

So you'll forgive me if *Metal Gear Solid 4* lies forgotten on the floor now I've clocked it, but there's nothing there for me now. More importantly, I've got to focus on something far more vital – spending the next few weeks with my fingers in my ears until *Fallout 3* comes out.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE



Keith Stuart strums along with **Ephemeral Phantasia**

“Okay, so think *Groundhog Day* meets *Lord Of The Rings*, only with Bob Dylan in the lead role. Sure, the big games these days are all about recreating gritty urban warfare or the moral complexities of gangster life, but I think a JRPG that combines folk music and the space/time distortion deserves a little recognition too. A troubadour is never going to be a great action hero, but who needs an AK47 when you've got lilting ballads? The game's tougher than a fossilised walnut with a time-twisting plot that *Lost* writers would reject, but there's nothing more relaxing than wandering some virtual woodland, whipping out my guitar for the locals.”





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Worried about storing your extensive collection of women smoking using their feet on the work laptop? Use these innocent Star Wars-themed USB sticks.

£20

mimoco.com

Gold LG 71PY10 HDTV

Take a 71 inch plasma, a top of the range home cinema system, plate the lot with 24 carat gold and what do you get?

Burgled

£70,000

uk.lge.com



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Ensure your children never sleep again with this horrific bedroom light. "Daddy, Mr Hugs wants to know where his head is. He's angry all the time now."

£50

gadgets.co.uk



Want that

Lust-have kit for PlayStation people

Tengu

A small plastic face that moves its mouth when people speak might not sound like much, but place it in front of a yapping co-worker and suddenly listening to their endless relationship woes is bearable.

£20

firebox.com



Vstone Black Ox Robot

Only 30 of these one-and-a-half-foot dark automatons have been created. Any more and they'd almost certainly be running Russia by now.

£3,700

vstone.co.jp

Ego Bentley Laptop

Even with its 160GB hard drive, Bentley's at leather casing and paint job, it's a hell of a price for something you're only going to use to endlessly rewrite the first paragraph of your novel.

£10,000

ego-lifestyle.com



Prices and availability of products are all correct at time of going to press

Sony Ericsson Xperia X1

Let this smart phone run your life like a ruthless but sexy PA



£450

sonyericsson.com/cws/home

In a nutshell

Sliding smart phone that comes with Windows Mobile and high quality video streaming, perfect for making killer business deals and video calling your supermodel girlfriend. Or checking Facebook to see if anyone's commented on your latest 'note' and watching clips of funny cats.

What's so special?

It only weighs 145g, but hidden beneath the X1's shiny, 65,536 colour screen lurks a full qwerty keyboard to make the most of all the phone's features. Even if the only emails in your inbox are from Nigerian princes and herbal Viagra suppliers, sorting through them is as easy as touching the screen or twiddling the optical joystick. When you're not working you can play: recording video or watching it in Windows Media Player, and snapping endless photos of your gurning mates in the local with the 3.2 megapixel camera.

Tell me more...

As well as Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Outlook email, its 400MB memory is packed with all the modern day phone essentials. Like? Bluetooth, assisted GPS, WLAN, RSS feeds, and you can boost its storage whenever you like with a Micro SD memory card. Imagine taking your own super-pretty personal assistant with you wherever you go, only without worrying about the salary. Or the pending harassment case.

Keyboard

Just in case the full qwerty keyboard fails you when you're typing out 'take me back' emails to your ex, the phone is also equipped with handwriting recognition.



Screen

The touch screen has unique feature panels that you can move around and edit with the touch of a grubby finger.

The facts

Weights 145g
3.2 megapixel camera
3 inch WVGA screen
65,536 colour TFT display
Windows Mobile with Outlook and Office
VGA 30 fps high quality video

PLAYSTATION TOP 10 CHARTS

This month's heroes and zeroes

▲ Up ▼ Down ● Non mover + New entry

PS3

- 1 + Soulcalibur IV
- 2 ▼ Metal Gear Solid 4
Guns Of The Patriots
- 3 ▼ Call Of Duty 4
Modern Warfare
- 4 ▼ Beijing 2008
- 5 ▼ Battlefield Bad Company
- 6 ▲ Gran Turismo 5 Prologue
- 7 ▼ Grand Theft Auto IV
- 8 ▼ Buzz! Quiz TV
- 9 ▲ Guitar Hero III
Legends Of Rock
- 10 ▼ Top Spin 3

Source chart-track.co.uk

PS2

- 1 ● Wall-E
- 2 ▲ Lego Indiana Jones
The Original Adventures
- 3 ▼ Kung Fu Panda
- 4 ● Guitar Hero III
Legends Of Rock
- 5 ● The Incredible Hulk
- 6 ▲ Guitar Hero Aerosmith
- 7 ▲ The Sims 2 Castaway
- 8 ● Alone In The Dark
- 9 ▼ TT Superbikes RRC
- 10 ▲ UEFA Euro 2008

Source chart-track.co.uk

PSP

- 1 ● Crisis Core FFVII
- 2 ● Wall-E
- 3 ● Lego Indiana Jones
The Original Adventures
- 4 ● God Of War
Chains Of Olympus
- 5 ● Secret Agent Clank
- 6 ● Medal Of Honor Heroes 2
- 7 ● UEFA Euro 2008
- 8 + International Athletics
- 9 ● Star Wars Battlefront RS
- 10 + SBK 08

Source chart-track.co.uk

The PlayStation entertainment plan

Never spend a moment unfulfilled with our monthly guide

Monday



Tuesday

02

Issue 23 on sale

And it's in your hands right now. Send your love letters, furious rants and oblique haikus to opm@futurenet.co.uk

Wednesday



Thursday

Friday

05

Win an HDTV

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames is out, so celebrate by invading Venezuela or entering our competition for a hot HDTV. pandemicstudios.com/mercenaries

Saturday

06

Check out

The current king of comedy Chris Rock brings the funny (and, most likely, all the big swears) to London's Hammersmith Apollo. hammersmithapollo.net

Sunday



08

In disguise

A movie starring Megan Fox and Optimus Prime? Yes! *Transformers* is released on Blu-ray. transformersmovie.com



10

Girl power

Sony's Queen of SingStar, senior producer Paulina Bozek, is one of the ladies you-go-girling at the Women In Games conference. womeningames.com



12

Riding dirty

Forget shiny sports cars: *Edge of Control*, released today on PS3, is all about dirt tracks and dust clouds. bejagame.com



15

Game plans

Id Software's new game, *Rage*, is like Mad Max meets The Hills Have Eyes, and it's the hottest ticket at the Austin Developer's Conference. austingdc.net



19

Dark side

Ignore everything the small green wrinkly dude said and use your Jedi powers for evil in *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*. Out today on PS3. lucasarts.com/games/theforceunleashed



20

Rough vs smooth

Annual take their slick pass 'n' move skills cop north for a stern test against a robust/foully Bolton side - it's live on SofaMia. setanta.com

21

Faking it

Thinking of entering the UK Air Guitar Championships in Brighton today? Remember: all the pros use air FX pedals. ukairguitar.com

26

Car crash

It's the future, there's a big prison and some fast cars. Don't make that face; we reckon Jason Statham's *Death Race* remake will be a guilty pleasure. deathracemovie.net/index.php



29

Rabbit rabbit

Make like the cool indie kids by pretending to understand the plot of *Donnie Darko*, out today on Blu-ray. donniedarkofilm.com

30 Sep
Issue 24 on sale.
Subscribe now
on page 40

30

01



02

Beach boys

Mercury Prize nominees British Sea Power play the Brighton Corn Exchange for Last FM. timelapseproject.co.uk

03

Level pegging

Hit the cinema to watch Spaced slacker Simon Pegg shock, insult and harass the rich and famous in *How To Lose Friends And Alienate People*. paramountpictures.co.uk/howtolosefriends

5 Sep
Mercenaries 2
on sale



Win an HDTV and a PS3

With Mercenaries 2: World In Flames

Mercenaries 2: World In Flames is all about maximum destruction for maximum payola. Playing as an elite mercenary there's nothing like taking down a helicopter with a rocket launcher, and what could be better than watching the chaos unfold in HD? We're giving away an HDTV, a copy of Mercenaries 2: World In Flames and a PS3 to play it on, all courtesy of EA. All you need to do to be in with a chance of winning is correctly answer this question:

Where was the PS2 prequel, Mercenaries: Playground Of Destruction, set?

ABRAZIL **B**ANTARCTICA **C**KOREA

To be in with a chance, text using the word Merics followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name and address to 87474, or enter at futurecomps.co.uk/mericscomp23. Winners picked at random from all correct entries. Closing date 30.09.08.

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FIVE YEARS AGO IN OPM

This month we visit
OPS2 #38

If the cover could make a noise it would sound like this: 'VRRROOM! SQUELCH! Hard left no gas into easy right.' Which, as anyone who's ever taken their PS2 off-road will know, is the unmistakable call of **Colin McRae Rally**, and proof that we'd nabbed the exclusive review of the 04 update. It got a solid nine, and we said it was a 'superlative racing sim with a tank full of satisfying options'.

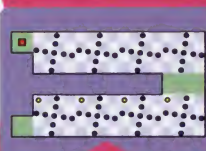
Talking of off-road, news saw us trumpeting – yes, trumpeting – the arrival of 'snuff gaming', and getting 'worryingly excited' about Rockstar's upcoming **Manhunt**. Only slightly less controversially, we also insisted that grimy future shooter **Killzone** wouldn't be just as good as Halo, it'd actually be 'much better', having played the first three levels. Also featured: a leaked trailer for **Shadow Of The Colossus** – known at the time as Ico 2 or Nico – from a Spanish games forum, and news of Spider-Man's move into an open-world Manhattan.

FIFA 2004 was previewed in our high concept 'FIFA Club' feature. 'The first rule of FIFA club is you do not talk about Pro Evo' we explained, before breaking our own rule a few pages later with a hands-on of Konami's **Pro Evolution Soccer 3** ('we're hooked and we want more'). Also looking sharp were **Jak II: Renegade**, described as 'a beautiful world to fall into', and **The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King**, which was 'sexy like the slumber parties we dream about Liv Tyler organising for the other lady elves'.

After Colin, reviews were dominated by Guitar Hero precursor **Amplitude** and **Conflict: Desert Storm II** (both 8/10), while the truly awful **London Racer: World Challenge** staggered home last with a generous 3/10.

FIVE MINUTE SKIVE

Games to play when the boss isn't looking



The World's Hardest Game
Puzzler that bullies as it beats you. You're a red square and must collect yellow circles and make it to the green zone before the blue circles get you. Hey, we've all been there.

snipurl.com/38sxu



Totem Destroyer
Proof of what the music press always knew: knocking stuff down is more fun than building it up. Remove the required number of blocks without the tiny gold idol perched on top getting smashed.

snipurl.com/38sy6



Tree Trumps
One for the lumberjacks. It's just like Top Trumps, only much woodier. Sure, the stats of superheroes and monster trucks are compelling, but can they really compete with the density of the Opepe tree?

snipurl.com/38sy6

Subscribe

And get Monty Python's The Life Of Brian and The Adventures Of Baron Munchausen on Blu-ray!*



For the first time ever, Monty Python's The Life Of Brian is available in glorious HD. Having topped numerous greatest film polls, it has now reached another benchmark by being the first Monty Python title to arrive on the brand new high definition Blu-ray format, allowing you to enjoy one of the funniest films ever made with crystal clear audio and visual.

LIFE OF BRIAN: © 1979 Python (Monty) Pictures Limited. All Rights Reserved.

Just who is Baron Munchausen? Is he a 'Liar', 'Rogue', 'Madman' or the greatest superhero ever to triumph against unbeatable odds? Riding through the air on a cannonball, slaying a three-headed griffin, dancing with Venus and journeying to the moon are just some of the improbable adventures Baron faces before his final challenge... death itself.

BARON MUNCHAUSEN: © 1989 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



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Heavy Rain

*The new state of the art in
realtime 3D on PlayStation 3*

Special report:
How Nintendo
fell out of love
with hardcore
gamers

Exploring Fable II

Has Lionhead finally made
a game to match the hype?

Get into games

Expert advice on starting
a career in development

Spore science

Will Wright explains the
evolution of the god game

Issue 193 on sale now



26th ANNUAL

GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS

What's *your* game of the year?

It's GTA IV versus MGS4 at the Golden Joystick Awards

Niko Bellic, Captain Price, Solid Snake... We love them all, but now it's time to man up and pick a favourite. The Golden Joystick Awards are coming, and it's your votes that will decide who wins what, including the biggest honour of all: the Virgin Media Ultimate Game Of The Year.

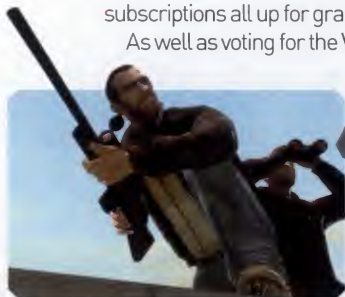
Voting is easy. Just head over to computerandvideogames.com/joystick and choose from the shortlist of 15 games. The hard part is deciding whether **Grand Theft Auto IV** was better than **Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare**. Not only will you be supporting your personal favourite, but for every 10,000 entrants one lucky voter will win a prize. There are consoles, Sony TVs, games, Mad Catz accessories and magazine subscriptions all up for grabs.

As well as voting for the Virgin Media Ultimate Game Of The

Year you can add your support to your favourite games in categories like the Nuts All Nighter Award and the BBC 1Xtra Soundtrack Of The Year. The ceremony itself will be held on 31 October, and you can watch it live at the Golden Joysticks official site.

Going for gold

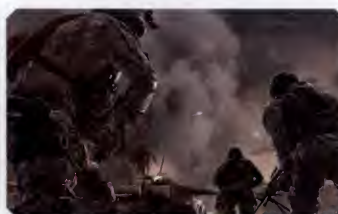
Last year over 750,000 gamers from around the world registered their votes. At the award show, hosted by Peep Show's David Mitchell, **Gears Of War** grabbed the Game Of The Year title. The awards might have been running since 1982, but with 2008's shortlist packed with massive games like **Assassin's Creed** and **Metal Gear Solid 4** this year's competition is going to be the most intense yet.



■ GTA IV is unquestionably OPM's Game Of The Year. But what would yours be?



■ MGS4 knocked GTA IV off the number one spot, but is it better than Rockstar's ace?



■ And let's not forget the super shooter that totally redefined its genre, Call Of Duty 4.



■ We won't be voting for Assassin's Creed, but that doesn't mean you can't.

To cast your Game Of The Year vote click on:

www.computerandvideogames.com/joystick



Preview

50 WOLFENSTEIN

Forget 'old' Nazis. These are the new devil-worshipping, magic kind. Look at him in the shadows, he knows he's cool.

PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK Previews

Latest info on Planet PlayStation's hottest games

Flamethrowers! No matter how many enemies you've killed in Call Of Duty games, nothing prepares you for World At War's new toy. Spraying roaring sheets of fire is unsettling enough; watching screaming people burn in HD is *horrible*. But it's the quiet ones that really make our skin crawl, as they walk silently, completely ablaze – we're still having nightmares. Find out what else we saw on page 46.

Staying with WW2 is Wolfenstein (p50). Think Medal Of Honor vs Hellboy as you fight an occult savvy German army and their pet monsters. Dead Space (p48) also brings the nasty, although new weapons, like a buzz saw firing rifle, make us feel *slightly* safer.

Haven't got the stones for that? How about some less threatening Midnight Club LA multiplayer info (p51), the latest on id's new racer, Rage (p50) or The Godfather's odd strategy flavoured sequel (p49)? Only slightly stranger than there being a sequel at all, mind.



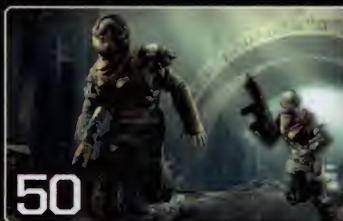
48 DEAD SPACE

EA's intergalactic gorefest reveals fresh monsters, new limb-slicing weapons and upgradeable spacesuits. We're saying 'Resident Evil 4 in space'.



49 THE GODFATHER II

"Hey boss, seeing as our last game didn't work so good, why don't we move away from free-roaming action and try business management. Boss? What's with the bat?"



50 RAGE

Motorstorm with machine guns! Developer id might not be saying why it wants people to tear around a post apocalyptic desert in heavily armed buggies, but who cares?



Preview



PS4
044

Classic Series Format PS3 ETA 18 November Pub EA Dev Black Box

Need For Speed Undercover

△ Burnt ● Rubber ⊗ Broken ⊕ Laws

John Riccitiello, CEO of the mighty Electronic Arts, was brutally honest about the Need For Speed series earlier this year. "It's not good," he told investors in June. "Who wanted Pro Street?" Fair enough. EA is keen to lose its reputation as a sequel sausage factory by giving its dev teams more time and freedom. The emphasis now, we're told, is on creativity – and Need For Speed Undercover is an early result of the new touchy-feely EA.

Roll deep

The new instalment seems, initially, like a radical departure from the customisation-heavy racing of the

previous games. This time there's an actual plot, written by one of 24's screenwriters and yet-to-be-named Hollywood talent starring in live-action cut-scenes. Our money's on Hayden Christensen who probably needs the work after Jumper. The setup itself sounds like Driver for dummies: you're an undercover cop trying to infiltrate a crime syndicate by posing as a reckless street racer. Riccitiello has referenced The Transporter as an influence, but NFS is clearly still in hock to The Fast And The Furious, as these first shots of high performance street cars tearing around city streets demonstrate.

The phrase EA is keen to get across is that this is an 'action driving experience'. So the emphasis is less on engine tuning and more on a story arc that brings together various racing and motoring challenges, as you chase the bad guy and get the girl. The new location is part of a fictitious tri-state area. It'll throw up a variety of environments, using the open-world driving introduced in Carbon to mix missions into a 'sandbox' style of play. Beyond that and an intriguing viral trailer (whichroadtotake.com) EA's is keeping very quiet. But with an 18 November release date, however, things are sure to get noisier soon.





Did you know?

The series began in 1994 with The Need For Speed on 3DO. It had eight real cars plus the Warrior PTO E/2, a stupidly fast but fictional car.

Motor City Online was an MMO version of the game released on PC in 2001.

NFS was created by Distinctive Software, bought by EA in 1991, and becoming EA Canada, the publisher's largest studio, which now employs more than 1,000 people.

Quick pitch

Back on the street

Forget Pro Street's competitions – Undercover returns to the series' illegal street racing roots.

A fair cop

The plot – yes, plot – casts you as an undercover cop posing as a street racer to catch criminals.

Action

There's less engine tweaking and body customisation this time. Instead EA describes it as "action driving".

❑ The problem with being an undercover rozzar posing as a crim is that no one told the rest of the law.

Could Be A Contender Singularity



This one sounds like it's going to be a winner

The premise

Sci-fi shooter set in a gloomy Soviet-run country where a time travel experiment has gone (predictably) wrong.

The reality

It's an FPS full of goons in crash helmets, exploding barrels – sigh – and vaguely sinister machinery.

The hook

You'll need to travel between different time zones. So, if a bridge is destroyed you'll have to find an era in which it still exists in order to cross it.

The inspiration

The ghosts in Bioshock's spiritual predecessor System Shock 2, and Soul Reaver's morphing environments.

The chances

Despite the cookie cutter setup, Raven has a long FPS history including the likes of Hexen and Quake 4.

Format PS3 ETA TBC Pub Activision Dev Raven Software



❑ "Back off, copper! I've got a stuffed crust that I won't be getting paid for if it's late."

Source Amazon.co.uk

Pre-Orders The punters' top three



1 Star Wars The Force Unleashed

Slay Jedi, rancor and anything else that gets within reach of your Force powers... Uh, we're guessing the people ordering this skipped our thumbs down preview.

Format PS3 ETA 19 Sep Pub Activision



2 SBK-08: Superbike World Champ

Two-wheeled racing at full throttle. Swap between the pure speed of arcade mode and the hardcore technical challenge of realistic simulation.

Format PS3 ETA 30 Sep Pub Blackbean



3 Rise Of The Argonauts

Search for the golden fleece and battle monsters while wearing sandals. It's action adventure, ancient Greek style.

Format PS3 ETA 19 Sep Pub Codemasters

Preview



Driveable vehicles are back, both in the main game and multiplayer. We call shotgun.

Gameplay Series Format PS3 ETA November Pub Activision Dev Treyarch

Call Of Duty World At War

⬆ Soldiers ⬆ Ships ⬆ Snipers ⬆ Swimming

Okay, be honest: was there ever a point in COD4's superb solo campaign where you wished the Russian ultranationalists would get out of their entrenched, impossible-to-impregnate position and fight like they had a pair? Careful what you wish for. If you've been weaned on enemies who squat in windows well away from the fighting, the first time you catch a Japanese trooper slithering through the undergrowth in World At War is a bit of a shock. And if you're used to sniping men from a mile away, the first time one runs at you, shrieking, with a katana, might give you a heart attack. However you feel about that as a portrayal of genuine Japanese military tactics, there's no denying that it makes for exciting gameplay.

Yes, despite the return to the over-familiar WW2 setting, this is a different COD experience from anything you've

played before. Though Treyarch has borrowed the engine used in Infinity Ward's Modern Warfare – including the ace 'Perks' system – the dev has fiddled with the AI in a bid to make the campaign even more intense. And the new brutality fits the change of setting. Where previous CODs took place on the relatively gentlemanly Western front, World At War features Marines battling the Japanese in the Pacific and the Red Army pushing the Nazis back to Berlin, furious at the atrocities committed in Russia. Bayonetings, torture and piles of corpses figure heavily – it's a far cry from the matinee vibe of the previous games.

Dosvidanya comrade

It's also clear that Treyarch has been influenced by COD4: one level mimics COD4's famous AC-130 airborne shooting mission, except that you're in a bomber taking on Japanese ships,

Quick pitch Back in time

It's COD4, but in the Pacific theatre of WW2, and with Treyarch (the makers of COD3) taking back the developing reins from Infinity Ward.

Two faces

You're a US Marine battling the Japanese, and then a Soviet Red fighting in Eastern Europe.

Go team

Four-way co-op offers the chance to form your own unit.

while another sees you following an injured Russian sniper as he points out Germans you need to shoot – very Chernobyl. But at the same time, they're adding new touches – the flamethrower introduced in PC expansion pack United Offensive is back, except that this time you'll be able to burn down foliage and certain buildings. Not to mention the enemy, themselves. Plus there's swimming for the first time ever.

There's also an attempt to improve on COD4's amazing multiplayer mode. It features both driveable vehicles and destructible environments, making for a new blend of tactical options. Equally intriguingly, there's the prospect of four-way online co-operative multiplayer – because when you're only ever one step away from a screaming Japanese soldier trying to cut your head off, you really want someone watching your back.

Prequels Also in the series

PlayStation 2



Call Of Duty: Finest Hour
(PS2, 2004)
Brits, Russians and Yanks kick Nazi ass.

PlayStation 2



COD2: Big Red One
(PS2, 2005)
The series' highlight before part four.



Call Of Duty 3
(PS2, PS3, 2006)
Introduced Polish and Canadian campaigns to confused battle fans.

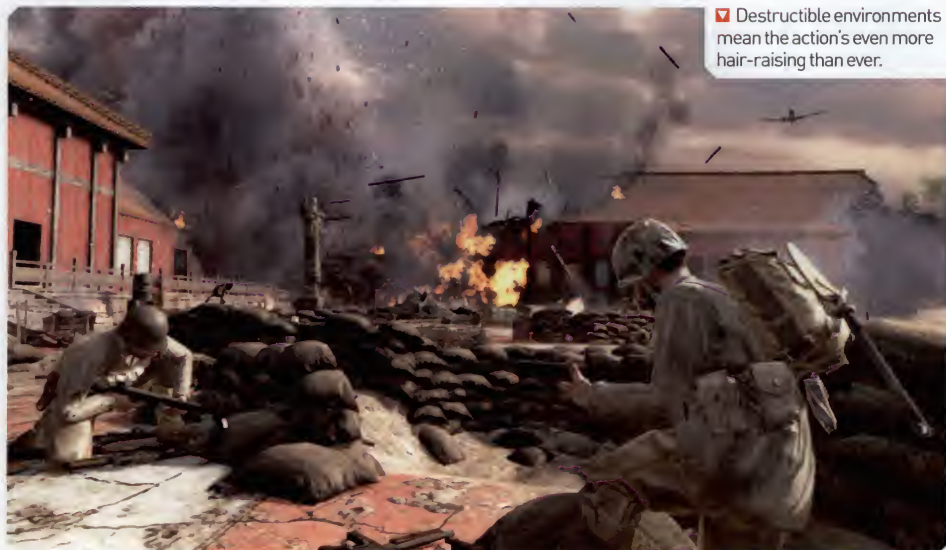
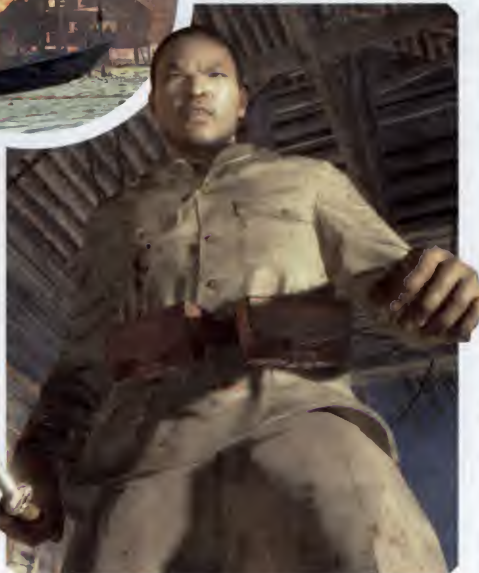
✔ An attack run against the Japanese navy sees you strafing boats from a plane.



✔ The Russian campaign sees the Nazis crushed in Berlin.



✔ Just in case you weren't sure, the angry blood-spattered man with the knife is your enemy.



✔ Destructible environments mean the action's even more hair-raising than ever.

Can't Wait To Play...



Industry insiders reveal their PS3 faves

Ralph Fulton
Chief game designer, Codemasters

Operation Flashpoint 2



"I've seen it in action and it's the rebirth of a classic. It does what you want it to do: it's a huge, open-play military situation - an action game that gives you a battlefield to go to work in. And it also looks awesome."

Little Big Planet

"It's a classic Sony product. It's exactly what Sony needs at the moment: it's so quirky and so innovative. It will be a breath of fresh air."



Pro Evolution Soccer 2009



"Pro Evo 2008 was very poor. It seems to be one year on, one year off with the PES series. Pro Evo 2009 needs the passing to be improved. They should also fix the chipped through balls. And the Glasgow Rangers team stats were very, very low last year... although that might be a research problem!"



Preview



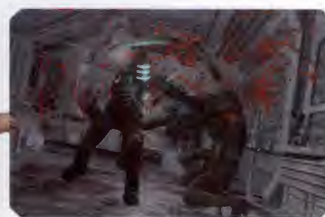
Isaac is no soldier, just an unlucky engineer.



Your suit can be modified with credits.



Decapitating an alien is just step one...



...step two is to remove every extremity.



Your real-time holographic inventory.



There are allies as well as aliens on board.



You can slow time if things get tricky.



Even the smallest enemy can be deadly.



Just making completely sure it's dead.



Taking on the giant squelchy valve beast.



You'll receive regular objectives from HQ.



Melee attacks are for emergencies only.



Look out for this guy's explosive punch.



Falling down is usually a fatal mistake.



"Be honest doc, is it bad?"



There will be blood. Seriously, lots of blood.

Rivals



Resident Evil 5

(PS3, Capcom)
Chris Redfield travels to Africa to discover more about the origins of the T-virus.



Alone In The Dark

(PS3, Atari)
Ultra-delayed survival horror finds monsters, myths and conspiracies in Central Park.



Silent Hill Homecoming

(PS3, Konami)
The foggiest town on PlayStation and all its disturbing horrors call out to war veteran Alex Shepard...

Dark Horse Format PS3 ETA 31 October Pub EA Dev EA Redwood Shores

Dead Space

△ Head ○ And × Shoulders □ Severed

There are no extra points for headshots here. In fact, they could even get you killed – because decapitating some of Dead Space's aliens only serves to make them angrier. To stand any real chance you have to shoot off as many arms, legs and tentacles as you can.

The gory action is set on board a galactic mining ship, and every inch of the vessel is infested with alien scum who look like unused extras from The Thing. As hero engineer Isaac we get a bloody introduction to them in the ship's Hydroponics lab. They're a mix of gangly flesh monsters with long, thrashing arms, and small betentacled beasts. And they move fast.

Initially, we die a lot, until we master our special abilities. Like telekinesis, which can be used to pick up and

throw anything that isn't nailed down. But the most useful ability is a time-slowing stasis field. Especially when stumbling into the giant quasi-sexual valve boss encountered in a tunnel at the end of the level. The effect only lasts seconds, but it was enough to slice off the beasts appendages and roast them with the flamethrower.

Floating in space

A trip to the ship's bowels gave us the chance to experience zero gravity. There are pockets of it around the ship, where you can leap from floors to walls using magnetic boots to stick fast. Manoeuvring is as simple as aiming and hitting △ to leap forward. To prevent Isaac getting

lost, R3 projects a bright blue line onto the floor, which leads you to the current objective.

Everything from the idiot-proof GPS to your Minority Report-style holographic inventory gives the game a fresh futuristic feel. Plus your weapons aren't the usual zappy laser guns – one fires buzz saws; another is like an enormous laser cheese-cutter. And that's just your basic models. Along with Isaac's suit, all your firepower can be upgraded at workbenches dotted around the ship, using credits. Choosing where you spend your cash means you can tailor weapons for any encounter. Which, if the horrors we've seen are anything to go by, should definitely be top of your 'to do' list.

❑ Eliminating witnesses protects your crew from legal repercussions.



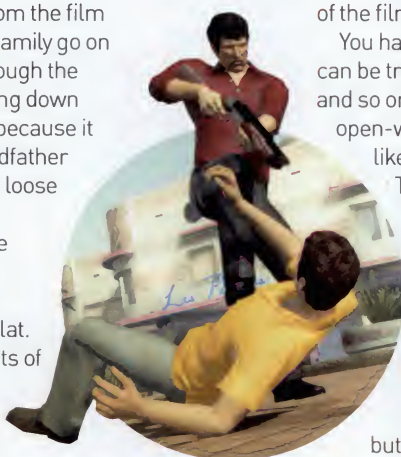
Full Price: Sony (of The World) In Your Format PS3 ETA Spring 2009 Pub EA Dev EA

The Godfather II

Ⓐ Nothing Ⓑ Personal ✕ Just Ⓒ Business

Remember that bit from the film when the Corleone family go on an arsonist rampage through the streets of Havana, shooting down pedestrians? No? That's because it never happened. EA's Godfather sequel is playing fast and loose with its source material.

The first game tried the authentic crime drama angle, but compared to Coppola's classics it fell flat. Now the strategy elements of the original have been expanded far beyond cracking shopkeepers' heads to extort cash. You play the son of Aldo – your character from the first game – charged with minding the family business while the events



❑ Squint and you can see Fredo looking sad in the window.

of the film play out elsewhere.

You have a hand-picked crew who can be trained – demolitions, thieving and so on – and you ride around open-world cities from the movie like New York, Miami, Havana.

The aim is to muscle in on enemy operations and build up black market monopolies. You can also play from an overhead map perspective to manage resources while getting a view of the overall situation.

The shooting looks shaky, but the strategy's intriguing – you can even take your gang online and wager earnings on battles with mates. But isn't this drifting far away from the films utter madness?

What you do in The Godfather II



You conquer The meat of the game will be out-muscling enemy crews and ousting them from grim industrial estate factories, shop fronts, and black market businesses. Once you've waded in and wrecked the place, it's up to you to defend the premises from AI attempts to take it back.



You plot This time, the tactical side of the game plays a more central role. Using the Don's View (which is, uh, a big old map) you can manage your properties, scope out the strength of enemy defences and build monopolies to earn perks such as bullet-proof vests for your boys.



You beat One thing that hasn't changed is the physical intimidation. The analogue stick system's gone in favour of a more complex shoulder button combo mechanic, but the idea is still the same – coerce small-time businessmen to pay protection by finding their individual weak spots. "Your daughter, she's real nice..."

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ Little Big Planet love

Keep your sackfingers crossed people, because we hope to have a special gift to go with next month's world exclusive review.

▲ Falling for Fallout

Fill the void between now and Fallout 3's new late October release date by reading Cormac McCarthy's none-more-bleak book The Road – it's a huge influence on the game.

▲ High calibre

Soulcalibur IV sells two million copies quicker than you can say "I'll take the one with massive CG knockers please."

▼ Bat is old hat

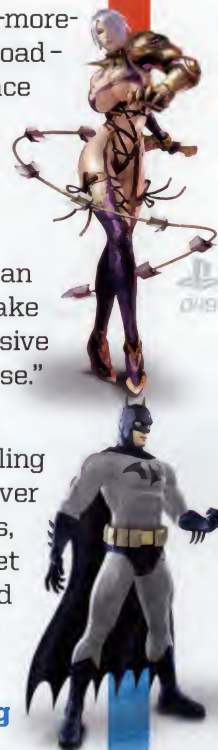
We're just not feeling MK vs DC. Whatever the explanation is, seeing Batman get kicked in by a load of ninja no-marks is just wrong.

▼ Sega's hellhog

Come Christmas, every Sonic Unleashed review will read "love the super quick side-on bits, absolutely *hate* the werehog fighting stuff".

▼ Busters busted

The highest profile game 'put out to tender' following the Actibizzard merger is Ghostbusters. And by 'put out to tender' we almost certainly mean 'taken out and shot'.





Preview

Classic Series **Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Activision Dev Raven Software**

Wolfenstein

Ⓐ Supernatural Ⓞ Nazis ✕ Mein □ Gott!

A first-person shooter with Nazis is hardly bracingly new, but a shooter full of crazy voodoo Nazis? Yeah, worth a look. The original Wolfenstein ushered in the FPS era, and had a final boss battle against a minigun-toting cyborg Führer. This new incarnation is a *little* more sensible – with a Call Of Duty feel, crisp visuals and open environments – but it's still heavy on WTF. So expect glowing occult energy, crazy Nazi disintegrator guns and a demented mecha master race to obliterate.

The Nazis have been tinkering with the supernatural, tearing a doorway to another dimension called The Shroud and revealing balloon-like monsters called Collectors who scavenge for supernatural energy. Fortunately, all-American hero BJ Blazkowicz can use these powers too, hopping through The Shroud to find hidden doorways or stop time. So History Channel accuracy is out. But, as an antidote to the usual WW2 clichés, Wolfenstein might just do the trick.

Dev talk



"The Nazis are digging into this energy source... using it to make weapons. They want to take over the world – they're Nazis!"

Eric Blessman
Creative director,
Raven Software

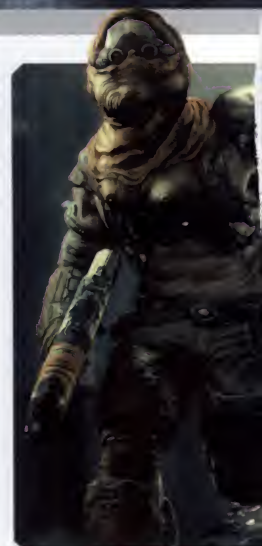
Hot Developer **Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub EA Dev Id**

Rage

Ⓐ Sand Ⓞ Dust ✕ Wheels □ Guns

The collapse of civilisation will no doubt be problematic for some, as will the unholy army of mutants that will be unleashed, but it'll also create the *perfect* terrain for motor sports. Rage, Id's shooter/racer hybrid, has already shown off its fugly enemies, but recently we caught a glimpse of the Motorstorm-style buggy tournaments. Racing on a track called the Dusty Eight, there are no fancy cars on show, just industrial buggies and terrain that

wouldn't look out of place in The Hills Have Eyes. As they speed through dust, competitors use ramps to jump and bonnet-mounted miniguns to turn rivals into balls of flame. It's unclear how much time you'll spend behind the wheel, but Id was quick to point out that the bulk of the game, with its mix of action and RPG elements, will be about story-driven missions. Guns, mutants *and* high-speed racing? So far, so apocalyptically good.





Quick pitch

Super bad

Classic WW2 shooter series returns – again mixes Nazis (boo!) with the occult (yay!).

Power trip

'Shroud' super powers, such as slowing time, can be upgraded throughout the game.

Kit bag

As well as your standard retro boom sticks, you can play with Nazi tech like electric death rays.



Imagine the dollar that reg plate would fetch on eBay.

Hyundai Magna Format PS3 ETA October Pub Rockstar Games Dev Rockstar San Diego

Midnight Club Los Angeles

△ Street ○ Race ⊗ Online □ Trailblazer

At night in Midnight Club, the lights which line the broad and brilliantly raceable streets of Los Angeles glow a warm white-yellow in the Google Earth-style overhead map. This is the map visible during multiplayer lobbies, showing the course you'll be following through the open-world city, and it's a big reason why finding where the hell you're supposed to be going in Midnight Club, which pioneered the free-roaming race genre, is much easier than in the similarly sun-kissed streets of Burnout Paradise. Fizzing coloured

flares mark the route both in the actual streets and on the circular mini-map, ensuring you always know where you are, no matter how fast you're going.

Speed demon

And you'll be going *fast*. During our multiplayer hands-on we raced a bike for the first time – a Ninja ZX-14 – which, using the first-person view, was exhilarating, the whole screen tilting 45° and more as we swooped round corners inches from the deck. We can't wait to compare the final version of this and Burnout's bike-patched Paradise.

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It took an apocalypse to make it happen, but crop tops for men were finally fashionable again.

Where The Hell Is? Aliens RPG

Xenomorphs play it coy

In all the excitement over Aliens: Colonial Marines, the Aliens RPG that was announced by Sega way back in 2006 has quietly slipped away. You'd expect more of a fuss over a game that's being developed by Obsidian Entertainment, the company that earned its RPG pedigree with Star Wars Knights Of The Old Republic II: The Sith Lords and Neverwinter Nights 2, but there's been nothing. Not a single screenshot or snippet or info. It was rumoured to be shown this summer. Then: nothing. Perhaps it's some new form of stealth development, but if we don't see something soon, we may just forget about it for good. Acid for what now?





Preview

Hype Magnet **Format** PS3 **ETA** 2009 **Pub** EA **Dev** EA Black Box

Skate 2

Ⓐ Boards Ⓢ Fractures ⊗ Girls Ⓚ Plot

Go anywhere, flick the right stick, do a trick. It was the brilliant control system and commitment to real player freedom that saw Skate dethrone Tony Hawk at the first attempt. Which is why giving the sequel a story worries us. It doesn't need one. Nonetheless, here it is: it's five years later and an unnamed disaster has destroyed San Vanelona. The Mogolcorp Company has moved in to refurbish the city and there's a crackdown on 'boarding – security goons patrol the streets and metal spikes called 'skate stoppers' have been installed in the best spots, which ruin both bones and combos if hit.

Old dog, new tricks

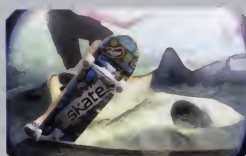
Fresh tricks even the score, though. Like Hippy Jumps, which see you leaping obstacles while your board shoots underneath. And flip tricks are in – a massive omission from the last game. The most interesting addition though, is the new environmental 'grab'. On the board you can use it to perform an Invert (handstand to us), while off it you can grab objects, like bins and benches, and move them around to create new skate lines. All good then, so it looks like another tough Christmas in the Hawk's house.

2 **Lady business**
Unlike the original game you can now go girl! when creating your skater. You can also get off the board and walk. A godsend if you ever fell up stairs trying to get about in Skate 1

1 **Grab it**
The most important addition to Skate is the ability to grab the board and perform finger flips. They're easy to do: simply get hold of the board, then use the right stick to 'tweak' the trick.

3 **Tricky hill**
There are over 200 new moves to master – twice that of the original game. There will be bigger drops to get more air and you can head out of the city for high-speed downhill runs.

How it works What's on in the city of San Vanelona?



The city has undergone massive renovations meaning all-new skate lines and buildings to trick.

While there are new areas to skate, a crackdown on 'boarding means The Man is 'hassling' you. Keep an eye out for anti-skater booby traps designed to de-board the unwary.





The Latest On...

New shots, new games, new info



Flower

Format PS3 ETA Autumn Pub Sony

More ambient gaming from the Flow developer. This time you're the wind – finally! – using Sixaxis to steer the air, blowing it through peaceful landscapes and collecting petals shaken from the plants... WAKE UP AT THE BACK!



SOCOM Confrontation

Format PS3 ETA Winter Pub Sony

Sony's 32-player shooter is shaping up to be the next big thing on PSN, with its whipcrack run 'n' gun action and deep customisation options. Bad news if you're planning to bulk up on armour though: it now weighs you down.



Star Trek Online

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub TBC

Yes! A Star Trek MMO in which you can send nameless ensigns to die on strange planets. As a starship commander in the 25th century you must seek out new life. Shooting the new life is optional, but we find it best to err on the murderous side.

There's more...

Square Enix has revealed two brand new RPGs heading to PSP. First up is **Final Fantasy Agito XIII**, which was originally heading to mobile phones. That'll be followed by **The 3rd Birthday**, a spin-off from the horror flavoured **Parasite Eve**. A recent lead multiplayer designer job ad for 2K has asked for applicants that are "familiar with **Bioshock**", suggests multiplayer might be on the cards for the sequel. The team behind **Echochrome** is also working on a new game. It won't be a direct sequel but will be built around a new form of visual trickery. **Call Of Duty: World At War** might be on the way in October but Activision is planning another game in the series in 2009 says CEO Bobby Kotick. Could this be Infinity Ward's rumoured **sci-fi COD**? Phasers set to "please". Another confirmation from Marvel Production's boss Kevin Feige: there's a new **Marvel vs Capcom** on the way. That's all he's saying for now but let's just imagine what a Ryu/Wolverine face off would look like using Street Fighter IV's engine. EA is releasing new pack art for **Madden NFL 09** (see p.96) after cover man Brett Favre left the Green Bay Packers for the New York Jets. You can get it at ea.com.



Silent Hill Homecoming

Format PS3 ETA September Pub Konami

Turns out Alex's brother isn't the only missing person, there are loads of lost children. And we've seen a new boss – a spindly giant that hangs from the ceiling and swipes at you with massive hands.



Red Faction Guerrilla

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub THQ

A bit more exciting now we've played multiplayer. You can blast holes through walls and level large structures, and there's a brilliant jet pack to hop onto roofs or bombard enemies from above.



Rock Band 2

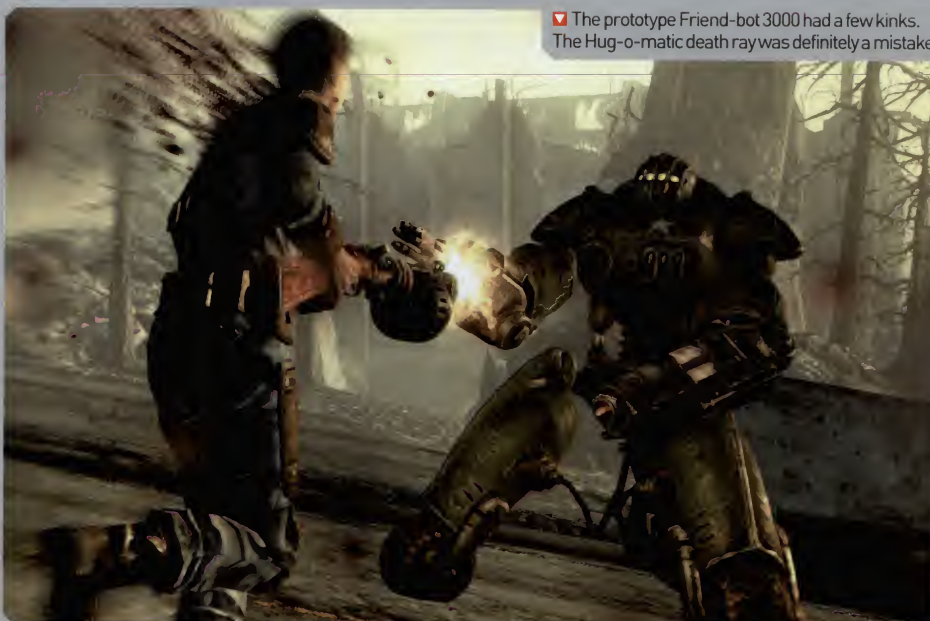
Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub EA

Now rocking a better character creation system with loads more haircuts, clothes and animations, plus you can also record your rock stars forever in a new photo creation mode.

Fallout 3

Format PS3 ETA October Pub TBC

The world might have ended in an apocalyptic inferno but the US government still think they're in control. Now calling themselves the Enclave, they're one of the factions you'll encounter as you search the wasteland for your missing father. They also have a few toys, like army killbots and Resistance-style twin engine helicopters. They even have ad-bots that drift among the ruins spreading propaganda and playing patriotic music. Probably too late to catch the Obama vote.



✓ The prototype Friend-bot 3000 had a few kinks. The Hug-o-matic death ray was definitely a mistake.

Meta Head

PS
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After the critical and commercial triumph of MGS4, we caught up with director Hideo Kojima to talk about his past and future plans

When did you first show an interest in videogames? Which games did you enjoy playing and what developers did you most admire?

Well, I first had an interest in filming but could not be involved, I was facing frustrations at that time. But then there came the Famicom [released in Europe and America as the NES], and I fell in love with Super Mario Brothers. The Portopia Serial Murder Case was one of my favourites too. I really respected the creators, and enjoyed playing these games a lot. At the same time, I felt videogames were a new media, a media with potential. I thought that this industry was it – and decided to join the company I am in today.

You studied economics in college and originally had ambitions to be a film

director. What drove your decision to work in games and how did your family feel about it?

As I said, I felt that games were a new media, and I felt potential in that area too. If my father was alive back then, I am sure that he would have said no to me joining a games company. My friends and teachers said that I was crazy that I did not go work for a bank or some other proper industry at that time. My mother was the only person that understood and supported me on my decision to go to the game industry.

Is it right that when you joined Konami originally you wanted to work in the arcade division – and how did you feel when that didn't happen?

Yes. At that time, the leading platform in videogames was the coin-op [arcade

machine]. With that system you can use so many colours and the most sophisticated graphics of the time. After that it was Famicom and then lastly came the MSX, in order of advance technology. I happened to be stationed in the MSX team, and that was really not my wish. I wanted to create things from scratch in the coin-ops. I had a dream that I could design the control system and the body of the machine, but with the MSX, none of this was possible!

Tell us about your early days at Konami. Is it true that you once felt like leaving because many of your ideas were overlooked? What made you keep going?

I was helping out on the basic plot ideas when I first joined the company. I was like a trainee back then. It was fun, but really ►



interview

Hideo Kojima

tough. No one taught me what to do; I had no experience, and had no one to ask. So I was struggling every day, and ended up tweaking a bit of the idea, and that project was *Lost World*. After six months, since our project seemed that it was going nowhere, the company decided to can it. So yes, I did feel like leaving when the whole project got canned. But at the same time, I felt embarrassed to leave after all my friends said not to go to the game industry when I joined. I also felt that before leaving, I needed to at least once finish a project.

After the disappointment of *Lost World* it must have felt very gratifying when the MSX version of *Metal Gear* then became a huge success for you.

Actually I had a really great mentor in the company back then. He found out that I failed in my first project, so he invited me out for dinner one night to cheer me up. He was a real great guy. He was one of the guys that helped convince the company to do *Metal Gear* later on.

What was it like trying to cram so many gaming ideas into such limited technology? Were there any tricks you employed in order to get the most out of the MSX2?

In the division I was in there were also the coin-op and Famicom teams working on those platforms. So, you can really see the difference in technology, right in front of you. Me, being in the lowest technology team, the MSX team, always had to compete with these teams in order to catch the eye. Imagine you're making two different kinds of movies in one division. One is making a Hollywood blockbuster movie with all the 5.1 sound and everything, and the other team is creating a black and white silent movie. I was like this black and white movie team.

So, I always thought about ideas not relying on technology, but ideas to compete with the Famicom and the coin-op team. An example is *Big Core of Gradius*. In the Famicom version, you can display the boss, *Big Core* across the screen. But in the MSX version, you had to make this much smaller. VRAM object technology idea was born like this too. You know, moving the background and faking as if it was flying in space.

I think I owe my "idea thinking" habit to this division. Also, I had to know everything. Sound, programming, compression, because when you have an idea, you have to pinpoint how this can be managed and give ideas on the technology side too. "Why not move this program smaller here and place it here... so that you have a little bit more space here?" This also helped me to establish the "idea thinking" habit!

In what ways has the industry changed since you started? Do you still have to deal with the same sort of problems you were tackling in the late '80s and early '90s?

I think that basically the industry hasn't changed much, especially in Japan. Games are still regarded as just games. The creators are still businessmen, even after 20 years. Look at the authors of comics. They are called "Sensei" (teacher) with respect. Game designers are not called that even today. There was definitely a change when Sony came in to the industry. Research and development turned into "creators". Interviews with "creators" started, and events and parties became much cooler.

You're one of the few game designers who is universally recognised within the industry. How does all the attention make you feel, and does it create a lot of pressure when you are working on a new game?

I think that nothing about me has changed. I do feel little bit more responsible though. I can't just run around and do whatever I like

"I sometimes think, "this might not be a huge hit!" It is a little annoying."

anymore, that kind of responsibility. I also feel that I need to help lead the industry as a creator too. But at the same time, this distracts me from my creativity when I work on a game. I sometimes stop and think, "Hey, this idea might not make a huge hit!" This is a little annoying at times.

Your love of movies is very evident in your games, particularly *Metal Gear*. Can you ever imagine yourself stepping behind the camera?

I would love to direct a film in the near future. But don't get me wrong, I know what you are thinking! I want to direct something that was planned for the movie though. So, for me, directing a game and directing a movie is totally different. I strongly believe that games are games, and movies are movies.

You've had a few cameos in films like *Versus* and *Azumi*. Did you enjoy them, and were you recognised?

No, never. It was fun, sure. That was it.

***Snatcher* is arguably one of your most cinematic games and has a huge**

following with fans. Where did the concept originally come from?

I really loved adventure games. I still do, but at that time, I really wanted to create an adventure game. I loved mysteries too. There is this incident – a murder case, for example – and you investigate and try to reveal the mystery. I wanted to create this kind of a game. It was like I wanted to create an extension of the text adventure. I wanted to put in a tense feeling too. Many people say that *Snatcher* is like *Blade Runner*, but to me, it could have been *Terminator* or alien or robot themed. So *Snatcher* has this tense feeling in the game. Another challenge was to put an action part into an adventure game. I had so much resistance from the staff when I first explained this – "An adventure game does not have action!" they all shouted at me.

***Snatcher* is extremely gory in places, and has an intelligent, adult theme throughout. Did you face many problems over the game's release because of the adult themes?**

No, not really. It was planned for adults in the first place. It was for the PC, the PC-88 back

then, and went on to MSX2. It was definitely not aimed at kids back then. When the decision was made to port it to the PC Engine, yes, some people moaned about it, but back then the ratings weren't as strict as today.

There have been many mentions of *Snatcher* characters in recent *Metal Gear* games; could you perhaps be testing the waters for a new game?

No, no. Nothing like that. *MK.II* and the guy in the trench coat are all from *Snatcher*, but I wasn't thinking of testing of any kind. It's just a small thank you to the fans that have long supported me.

Where did the concept for *Policenauts* originate?

I have to go back to explain about when I started *Snatcher*. I was in my second year in the company and had to create *Snatcher* from nothing. No tools, no nothing. I did draw up a storyboard with five or six others, but the project went nowhere. One day, after a year or so, the company said to us, "What are you doing? If you cannot create this game, make it in two parts! Part one and part two!" The

concept sheet was like an encyclopaedia, it was that thick. So, *Snatcher* was the first part of this big project, but after a while, the company changed its mind and told us, "You can only make part one." I must say that *Snatcher's* reputation was quite good, but our company moved away from the PC business, and I could not create the second part.

So, for my next project, I started what I wasn't able to finish in *Snatcher*. Adventure, drama and action combined. That was *Policenauts*. At that time, there was quite a move in the company. I was stationed in Kobe with two other guys supervising the R&D [research and development] group, but that division was gone in a year. Next I moved on to the 'Research For Development' group, and I wanted to create a tool for an adventure game. That also went nowhere. Finally, R&D Number Five was formed in Kobe. I was stationed there and we were creating the game with five, six people.

By the way, the year after this Yoji [Shinkawa - Metal Gear's resident illustrator] joined the company, and *Policenauts* was finally completed. Oh, I might as well finish this long story. *Policenauts* was created for many formats. PC Engine, 3DO, PS1, Saturn. I wanted to create MGS. But this was not possible in Osaka at that time. Osaka was responsible for creating titles for the Nintendo platform. A little after that, KCEJ was created in Tokyo, and I became vice president, and that led to creating MGS. There you go - my whole career at Konami!

Have you ever considered making a sequel to *Policenauts*?

No, not at all. As I explained, I think that I finished what I wanted to do with *Policenauts*. Nothing more to add, actually. Also, nowadays adventure games are not so popular. I still like adventure games, and I wish I could create another one someday.

Now that MGS4 is done, you must have a stack of games you want to catch up on. What's in the pile?

I can't say that! I am starting on a new original project, and have also started to work on a few other things. But as Kojima Productions, I am not sure if the new one is top on the list. Maybe another title will make its debut earlier than my next original. Maybe...

What's been your most difficult professional moment during the entire *Metal Gear Solid* series?

I think it was MGS4. To create something with the size of the staff that we did for MGS4 was really something. I did lose some freedom of creating whatever I wanted. Better if I rephrase it to, "It was difficult just being a creator on a project of that size."



What's your response to the people who still complain about the length of cut-scenes? Has anyone on the team ever been brave enough to suggest you edit them down a bit?

I know it's long, but look, it's the last of the series. I wanted to explain everything. Also, I wanted to make every effort to make a touching story. I have to say, I did chop off many parts!

How confident are you that you can get even more out of PS3 in your next project than you were able to with *Metal Gear Solid 4*?

Really confident! Of course I am! All my staff, and myself, know what the machine is good at and what it's not. Most importantly though, now I know what it takes to create a title of that MGS4 quality.

What one thing would you say is your proudest achievement to date?

Every time when someone comes up to me and tells me, "I played your MGS!" I feel surprised, but at the same time, I really feel happy and proud about it. It means that I had an affect on someone.

Of all the bosses you've created in the *Metal Gear* series, which is your personal favourite and why?

You want a serious answer? Running Man from *Metal Gear Solid 2*. You have to chase him, but he runs so fast! I guess that many of you don't know this guy. A more famous character would be The End from MGS3. Is this better? Oh, I like The Boss as a character too. There was so much drama attached to that character.

If only one *Metal Gear* game could be placed in a capsule to be opened in 100 years' time, which one would you choose and why?

The original *Metal Gear Solid*. It was a breakthrough for me! MGS2, 3, and 4 were a little different. I had little pressure that it had to sell. MGS1, I did not have this. So I say with no doubt, MGS1. I would definitely not want to put in MGS4!

How is the *Metal Gear Solid* movie coming along?

There is nothing to say at the moment. It is proceeding well, but I can't give you any details at the moment.

Finally, what did you make of the latest *Indiana Jones*? Who nailed the aging action hero better, you or Steven Spielberg?

I think that Spielberg and Lucas are still there! It was a good movie.

Fly through the air,
throw cars, catch
bullets, rescue
people, or threaten
them, hang out with
the Joker, trash
Metropolis. Be the
ultimate superhero
and save the world
or destroy it

Ever wanted to be friends with Superman? Of course you have.
Live out your childhood dreams in **DC Universe Online**



**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REPORT**
PlayStation.
Official Magazine UK



feature

DC Universe Online



Metropolis is being brought to life by artists who've worked on the comics.

Even for the long-suffering residents of Metropolis, today's pretty much a write-off. Brainiac's invading the city and his warship looms ominously over the Daily Planet building like a giant angry fishbowl. His robo-henchmen are running amok in the streets, smashing the place up while nanobot-infected citizens lurch around like zombies. Lex Luthor's involved as well, adding his immense criminal intellect to the chaos as half a dozen other supervillains join in. Superman's doing his best to stop the madness. But getting in the way are me and 20 or so new 'heroes' trying to help. And amateur hour isn't going well. Getting carried away I throw a car, overenthusiastically knocking over a lamppost and taking out most of the police by accident. Welcome to DC Universe Online.

Not that things are going to be this bad every day. "The Brainiac invasion is one of the big events we've got planned,"

"You'll stop robberies if you're good, or mug old ladies if you're bad."

says creative director Chris Cao. "It'll let the heroes get together and fight to save the world, or let the villains rule it." And that's the big idea behind this comic inspired massive multiplayer online game (MMO). When Sony Online Entertainment announced DC Universe two and a half years ago, the idea of an MMO featuring all the top superheroes seemed confusing. Wouldn't everyone want to be Batman? Well, yes – and the simple answer is nobody gets to be him. Instead, you play as your own custom-made crusader – or crook – alongside DC's iconic cast of heroes and villains.

Light side, dark side

When the game starts, you're an unestablished wannabe hero or villain who's further down the pecking order than Aqualad or the Rainbow Raider. You'll be stopping liquor store robberies if you're good, mugging old ladies if you're bad. The likes of Supes or the Joker won't even know you exist. The gameplay takes its cues from undisputed genre-kings World Of Warcraft on PC. So while you can get by for



Reams of character art has been created, all of which has to be signed off by DC.

Softography

Untold Legends Dark Kingdom

(2006, PS3)
SOE's biggest PS3 game so far is this dull hack 'n' slash RPG. Cleave waves of foes, level up, repeat. Its best feature is four way online co-op.



Everquest

(1999-present, PC)
A fantasy MMO enabling players to battle, trade and quest across a world full of warriors, mages and monsters. Once calculated to be the 77th richest economy in the world.



Star Wars Galaxies

(2003-present, PC)
MMO based on Star Wars. A huge world to explore, impressive visuals and loads of customisation. The fans are hard to please though, with every expansion or tweak criticised.





▲ The action requires skill and timing rather than just clicking 'attack' and then going off to make tea.



a bit on your own, you'll have to join a League or a Legion – the hero/villain equivalents of Warcraft's 'guilds' – if you want to and get on the world.

Make a name for yourself and, if a job needs doing in Metropolis, Superman might give you a call and ask you to get involved. Batman, in line with his loner persona, is more reticent but you will get to work with him if you become important enough. Part of the draw is that you'll also be meeting the more obscure residents of the DC world: Metamorpho, Zatanna and the Blue Beetle are already confirmed for the good-guy roster, while the Mad Hatter, Batman's nemesis Bane and rogue Green Lantern, Sinestro, oppose them.

You'll also be able to earn loot – clothes and equipment that give you extra abilities, just like in Warcraft. But that doesn't mean you're going to end up looking ridiculous. "If you've got a pair of Thanagarian shoulder pads that enhance your flight but don't fit your look, you can just use their ability," says Cao, "You don't have to be wearing a set of feathers all the time."

I kick off playing as a heroine called Cold Snap, rocking thigh-high blue boots and an Uma in Pulp Fiction fringe. Each character in the game will have a 'base' for their abilities, like Energy or Earth – as you might expect, Snap's are built around ice, so as well as normal punches and kicks, she's got four frost-related superheroine abilities. They're each activated with a different direction on the D-pad: giant, icy boxing gloves, a frosty blast, an ice shield and the ability to summon icicles out of the ground. There's no limit to how many times you can use them, but there's a brief recharge period in-between shots, so

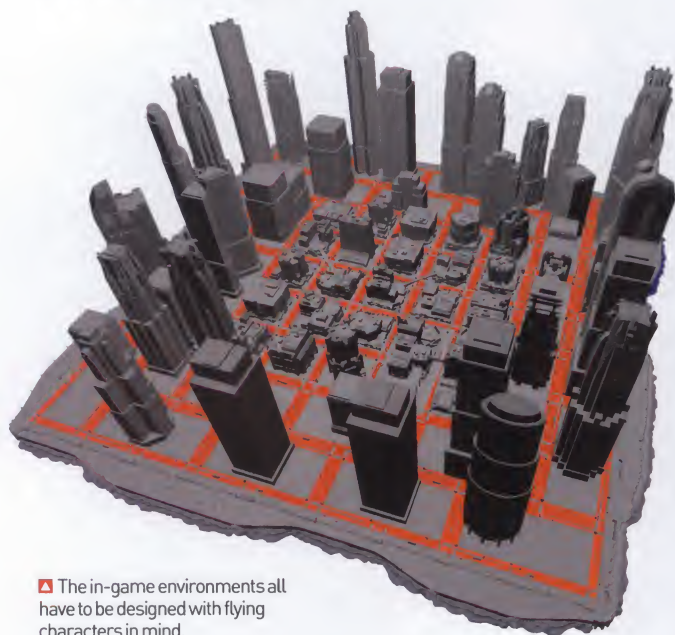


Build a hero

How to give yourself superpowers

Okay, so you can't choose to be Batman specifically, but you can decide to be 'like' him. The character creation facility will automatically generate a dark-suited character with acrobatic skills and a trouserful of gadgets. Otherwise, you'll be able to custom-make your own character via hundreds of different parts. They'll be designed to allow near-recreations of existing characters – so if you want a Green Lantern-style power ring, you can – but you won't be able to draw your own symbols or crests for fear of lawsuits from other comic companies. After all, Marvel probably don't want to see Captain America getting beaten up by Batman...





▣ The in-game environments all have to be designed with flying characters in mind.

you might have to pull out of combat while you regain strength. The game's designed so it doesn't punish you too much. If you die, you'll simply respawn instantly a mile or so away from the fight, or you can wait five seconds and jump back into the action at the same spot. Objectives are time-based, so the only 'risk' you ever run is failing a mission.

Costumes and catastrophes

Over time you'll level up, increasing your powers and earning new abilities. As you pound on your victims an experience meter fills up along the bottom of the screen – once it's full, a specific hero attribute, like defence or health, will improve. The game cycles through the attributes in order to level up in a balanced way. However, you can switch that off and manage your own development. So you if you want, you can become a powerhouse who's still weak like a baby if he actually takes a hit. As I ramp up my punching abilities, Cao explains that Cold Snap's also a speedster – clicking on **11** sends her into super-fast mode, which lets her sprint up walls and onto roofs. It's tricky to handle at first but who said being a superhero was easy?

Like Cold Snap's speed power, every hero will have certain special abilities that allow them to get around quickly. Heroes like Batman will work with ziplines or gliding, much like in *The Dark Knight*. Surely they're putting the Batmobile in? "We're not really talking about vehicles right now," says Cao. That said, the streets of Metropolis are littered with abandoned traffic, all of it just waiting to be picked up. Cold Snap's got full strength stats when I play – in the normal game she'd be weaker starting out – so I can pick up almost anything, including streetlamps, mail boxes and the schoolbus I eventually decide to lob at Brainiac's hordes. Locking-on and throwing is easy enough, but I accidentally nail the Man Of Steel, who's duking it out with a bunch of robots. This doesn't immediately provoke heat-vision justice, though. "If you're a hero and you cause too much chaos, hitting cops



Bio

Jim Lee was born in South Korea, but grew up in Missouri. He began on *Uncanny X-Men* in 1989 but later left Marvel to form Image Comics. He's been with DC, working on titles like *Batman* and *Superman*, since 1998.



Comic hero

Top DC artist Jim Lee talks to OPM

How did you get involved in DC Universe Online?

I was involved in the project before Sony! DC had been interested in doing an MMO based on the DC Universe years back. After a couple of false starts, the license landed at SOE.

What sort of quests can we expect to see? Will there be any grind missions, "catch 30 muggers" say?

It takes the fictional form of Cases and Capers. Heroes take on cases and villains pull off capers. Players will need to accumulate clues and gain contacts in order to get the information they need to complete their goals and crack the case, or get away with the caper.

How will you make characters balance out? Both in terms of creating fair combat and forming a balanced party.

In the comics there already exists the fiction in the DC Universe that explains how Batman can take down a character like Superman or how an archer can defeat a man who can run at insanely fast speeds. We just have to "translate" that and put it into the game whether it's through items or countermeasures... at the end of the day, every player will have ways to take each other down effectively.

Has working in the game enabled you to realise anything you couldn't do in the comics?

What is amazing about translating the DC Universe into the game has been the visceral feeling you get from doing the superheroic: from picking up buses and tossing them half a mile to running up buildings. There's an immediacy and sense of immersion to doing the action that really nails superhero action to me.

How exactly does creating a character work?

First you choose whether to be a hero or villain. The powers will be the same, regardless of alignment. Essentially, do you want to be more like Superman (meta), Batman (tech) or Zatanna (magic)? Then you choose how you manifest that power and how you want to move through the world (super-speed, flight, etc) and that essentially creates the broad range of abilities you get to choose from and unlock.



▲ The Green Lantern's ring gives him god-like power, limited only by his imagination. "Uh, I got nothing."



"You'll visit other cities like Gotham and Green Lantern's Coast City."

or trashing cars, you'll get in trouble," explains Cao, "and other heroes will be able to attack you." You won't be able to switch sides permanently, though – at least, not yet. This is the sort of thing that might be available as downloadable content, alongside the already-confirmed 'secret identity' feature, which will see your hero put on a suit and blend in with innocent bystanders.

More to come

Other features and storylines will become available later on, too – like travelling to the Justice League's moon-based Watchtower. "We started out thinking about whether we could recreate the whole world," says Cao, "but that idea died pretty quick." Despite that, it's still enormous. Metropolis features several huge areas, and you'll visit other cities like Gotham and Green Lantern's hometown Coast City. You might be wondering why there are so many heroes punching it out on the streets. That'll be explained in the story, co-written by legendary DC artist/writer Jim Lee who also designed the characters and locations. I suspect that whatever the reason DC's finest have got together, it'll be the chance to hang out with the greats that will be the crux of whether this succeeds or fails. Super-powered combat and powers are fun but the real appeal's going to be saving the world alongside the world's finest heroes. Or busting the Joker out of Arkham Asylum. And if I can hang out in the Batcave and drink cups of tea with Alfred, it'll probably be the greatest game of all time.



▲ You'll be able to form your own clan-style group of superheroes or villains. Get really famous and you may be invited to join renowned groups from the DC Universe such as the Justice League of America.

▲ Waiting for a superman: leading the work on the game for Sony Online Entertainment are vice president of development John Blakely (far left), and creative director Chris Cao (left). Blame them if your favourite character doesn't make the cut.



▲ Batman reacts furiously after catching the others looking for his secret stash on the batcomputer.



In the mood for... Disease

Fever? Cough? Awkward rash? Cross your itchy fingers it isn't one of these...

Everyone gets ill. It's just a nasty, unavoidable fact of life. But next time you're feeling sorry for yourself, chugging back the Lemsip and demanding mother comes over to make you a full roast chicken, be grateful you haven't got a PlayStation disease. Compared to these lethal bugs, a runny nose would seem like a day off; getting Ebola would be a mere dry cough. In the world of videogames there are plenty of mutagenic viruses that could see you stagger home with your skin on the inside and talons for fingers. Or worse... Bless you!

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The Progenitor Virus (Resident Evil)

Before the T or G virus there was the Progenitor – the Coke Classic of viruses – which was isolated by Dr Ashford, who it swiftly killed, and then weaponised by the mwa-hah-hahing Umbrella suits. Symptoms include severe aggression and mutation. Treatment involves a bullet to the face three times a daily.

FOX DIE (Metal Gear Solid)

Developed by Dr Naomi Hunter, the FOX DIE virus was injected into Snake to kill targets he'd come into contact with – ArmsTech president Kenneth Baker, members of military unit Foxhound – by identifying their DNA. Naomi also programmed it to kill Snake but his cloned DNA made it mutate, with the potential to become lethal to [drum roll] anyone.

Syphon Filter (Syphon Filter)

Truly the stuff of nightmares. The Syphon Filter is a lethal, genetically engineered virus that can be programmed to target specific ethnic groups' DNA. It's been created by a terrorist called Erich Rhoemer who's trying to start World War 3 by firing a missile filled with the bug at the US – presumably it zeroes in on the 'burger' gene.



intermission

A tasty PlayStation snack



Technocyte infection (Dark Sector)

The main symptom here is an enormous stabby Frisbee growing from our hero Hayden Tenno's hand which, for a murderous CIA agent, is actually a bonus. Useful for slicing up other infected people who've turned into monsters, but not so much when you're going through security at Heathrow.



Bloaty head (Theme Hospital)

"Good morning, I'll be your doctor today. How can I... *OH MY GOD! WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOUR HEAD!*? Wow, that really is something - it's like a balloon with your face painted on it. Does it hurt? Hang on let me check my big NHS book of diseases. Ah, here's the cure, just a slight prick and... Nurse, get the mop."



Porphyric Hemophilia (Oblivion)

You're at risk of catching this undead bug if you fight vampires. Leave it untreated and, after a few weird dreams, you'll become a fully blown blood-sucker. Pros: increased strength, impressive agility, spectacular charm. Cons: pale complexion, terrible thirst for blood, garlic bread's off the menu.

Now have your say

Any diseases we didn't catch? Email opm@futurenet.com and tell us. Here are a few other sickeners to avoid.

■ The Chimeran Virus - These aliens started off as humans who were converted by a strange infection. Symptoms include turning into an alien.

■ The Thing - A single cell can turn a person into a shape-shifting monster, so it spreads like a real disease.

■ Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children - This movie features Geostigma, a strange affliction that causes a nasty rash, then death.

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WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REPORT
PlayStation
Official Magazine UK

Here comes a new challenger!

More than 20 years after the first Street Fighter, Capcom is releasing two new versions of the greatest fighting series ever. All you need to know is right here...


Amazingly, Street Fighter II's world dominating success was an accident. During a playtest of its car-smashing bonus stage, lead producer Noritaka Funamizu noticed that certain moves interrupted other moves: one move cut off the last few frames of animation so that if the first hit connected, so would the second. It was the birth of the combo. Thinking the glitch would be far too difficult to use, Funamizu left it in as a hidden

feature. He underestimated gamers. Soon players across the world were using these accidental combos to create a totally new kind of tactical combat. By 1992, Capcom was tweaking the system to perfection, and a SNES port of SFII was helping Nintendo in its war against Sega's Mega Drive, going on to shift over six million copies and become Capcom's best-selling game ever. To date, the series has sold more than 25 million copies, and now, at last, it's coming to PS3.

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Abel is one of four new characters; here he's up against US war vet Guile.

Street Fighter IV

Reviving the classic SFII feel but looking fresh at the same time, SFIV introduces a new generation to the world warriors. Round one: fight!

The most important thing about Street Fighter IV isn't what's been put in, it's what's been left out. Parrying? Too difficult for most players to understand. Air blocking? Ruined the purity of fighting on the ground. X-Isms, Alpha Counters, Custom Combos? Gone, gone, and gone. For anyone who played Street Fighter II 15 years ago, the new game feels refreshingly familiar: simple, clean, strategic, beautiful. For new players, the basics of the fighting system take five minutes to pick up; learning all the special moves for every single character might take half an hour. The key isn't how many moves you can remember, it's how many you can use.

There are subtle tweaks to the combat system that open new tactical possibilities. Every character still has three or four specials, pulled off with specific combinations of stick motion and button presses. Like the series' iconic Hadouken fireball, which is



▲ All the old-skool moves, like Blanka's Electric Thunder, are back. Sorry, Zangief.



pulled off with a quarter-circle twirl of the stick followed by a punch. And you still build up a Super bar every time you hit an opponent. But the first big change is that you can use a chunk of your Super bar to enhance these specials – doing a bigger Hadouken, say – by pressing two attack buttons instead of one (there are six buttons in all: three for a weak, mid and strong punch and the same for kicks).

▲ Still rocking a fine line in pretend Nazi regalia is super-hard uber-boss M Bison.

Call the Ultras

You've still got a Super move – an extremely powerful attack unleashed with a couple of quarter-circles – but there's now also an Ultra move. This is a massive, multipart combo played out as a cinematic camera swoops around the action. There's a Revenge gauge which charges as you take a kicking and can be used to deliver special moves that stun opponents and tip the fight back in your favour. Finally, you have a Focus move – charged up by



▲ El Fuerte is like a tougher, meaner, stronger version of WWE grappler Rey Mysterio.



▲ Balrog's clearly been hitting his local pharmacy – sorry, the gym – in readiness for SFIV.



holding down both mid-attack buttons. This lets your competitor absorb a blow and, if pulled off correctly, stun your foe, opening them up to a free hit.

The key is that none of this stuff is complicated in its own right. Doing any special move is easy – the trick to winning is timing it right. Pull off a two-button fireball as your opponent

Q&A

SFIV producer
Yoshinori Ono



Street Fighter IV seems to be a return to the simple style of fighting games. Do you think that modern fighting games – like

Tekken and Virtua Fighter – have become too complicated?

Each [game] provides you a set of rules to follow. Games like Tekken and Virtua Fighter each have their own distinct rulebook. The great thing about those games is that their rulebooks are very refined and offer a great deal of depth. For Street Fighter IV we are aiming to bring Street Fighter II fans back to the table. We want them to feel at home, so we are basing the rulebook on the standards set by that game. To say that the other games are too complex or too difficult is something I think would not be justified. We just have different rulebooks, dictated by the audience we seek. It would be disingenuous to assume that something that is different must be better or worse than the thing to which we compare it. I certainly don't think that way.

Who designed the new characters, and how did you go about creating them and their fighting styles?

Let me start by crediting our designer, Daigo Ikeno. What I asked him to do was to examine the Street Fighter series closely and come up with designs that have not yet been tried but to keep them close to the established aesthetic so that the new characters would not look out of place lined up with the existing cast. We aimed for a style of movement that would leave an impression on players.

Who's your favourite Street Fighter character of all time?

I'd have to say that Dhalsim stands out in my mind the most. I can still recall the first time I faced him as an opponent in the arcade. I was a committed Ken user back in those days, but Dhalsim won me over with his charm. The instant I saw him move around the screen, I knew I wanted to control him.

The Focus attack seems to be the biggest change to the fighting system for Street Fighter IV. Can you give us an example of how to use it properly?

The cool thing about the Focus attack is that it combines offence and defence into a single move. There is no one way to properly use this move. Beginners can use it as a charge move to simply get a powerful attack in. Mid level players can take advantage of the defensive properties of the move and use it in a similar fashion to Street Fighter III's parry mechanic. High level players can string it together with other moves and cancels to pull off spectacular combos and bring out the depth of the game by trying to read and predict opponents' moves.

Which is your favourite of the new characters that have been revealed for Street Fighter IV?

El Fuerte. There was a great deal of fine-tuning and adjustments made to his moves right up until the last minute, and the result is that he is very well suited to what I think of as traditional Street Fighter II gameplay. In other words, he is especially tuned to players who carefully read their opponents' actions and react to what they predict the other guy will do.

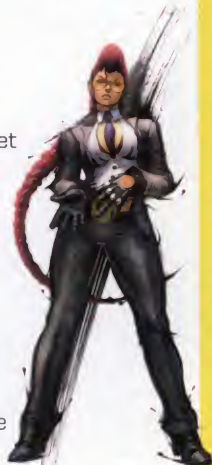


New Challengers

Introducing this year's crop of contenders for the world warrior crown.

C Viper

C Viper's come to the tournament with a pair of rocket boots, electrified gloves and a pocketful of seismic charges. She's the most heavily SNK-inspired of the characters, boasting a similar design to King Of Fighters' Iori and she fights a bit like Terry Bogard.



▲ No denying that new gal C (it stands for Crimson) Viper is a hottie.

El Feurte

The spiritual brother to Virtua Fighter's El Blaze shares his Lucha Libre cousin's nippiness, with a run move that he can follow with 18 (yes, *eighteen*) different attacks. Basic moves are weak, but his Ultra is one of the most powerful in the game.



is throwing a weaker projectile, say, and it'll go straight through and nail them. Do a two-button Hurricane Kick in the air, and the extra spin makes you go faster and changes your trajectory, which could catch someone off guard: simple and logical.

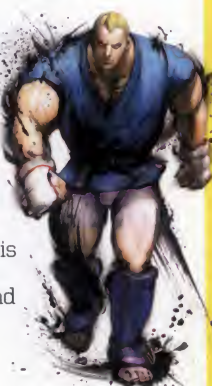
Super and Ultra moves are easy to do, but are so heavily scripted that

▲ Stretchy-limbed Dhalsim might be the most polarising video game character ever.



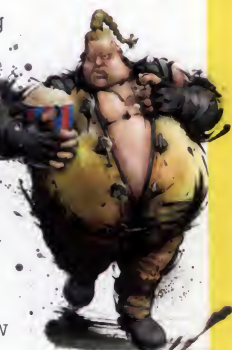
Abel

Boasting the shinpads/sleeveless gi combo usually worn by Russian sambo fighters, Frenchman Abel's most dangerous with his combo-starting Marseilles Roll and rushing punch-throw combo.



Rufus

Despite terrifying gut-wobble physics and a nauseating line of belly-fuzz peeking out of his suit, Rufus is quicker than you'd think. Apparently he's a fight fan determined to prove that he's better than fellow American Ken.



"Every combo and counter works as you remember."

successfully landing them means waiting for your opponent to mess up first and timing it perfectly. And although we can do Focus moves, we get the impression that we haven't scratched the surface of what's actually possible with them: every top-flight player we talk to says they're going to be a key factor in the game.

It's clear that a huge effort has been put into making this feel like a sequel to the classic Street Fighter II rather

than the score of other spin-offs that never quite reached the same heights. The decision to include all 12 fighters from SFII was taken early, and their basic moves are unchanged. Almost

every combo and counter works as you remember. When an early version was shown to playtesters, they claimed that it didn't feel right because the super-accurate 3D collision detection didn't feel the same as the blocky, rectangular detection boxes of the 2D games. It meant that timing on combos was out, so Capcom remodelled the entire system.

Other new features are expansions on classic Street Fighter touches.



▲ Chun-Li's Lightning Kick is swifter than ever and new boss Seth looks sufficiently terrifying, but fat newbie Rufus makes us sad.

Characters' eyes have always bulged when they're hit, but in full-flow 3D it looks spectacular. Even the backgrounds carry the same combination of mild ethnic stereotyping and cheeky humour as the original game – from the drunken Russians in Zangief's stage to the crazy party happening on the Diner stage. Some crowd characters had to be taken out of the back in Chun-Li's level because they were interfering with the game running at a smooth 60fps. We're told there's still at least one transvestite in the remaining spectators (a joke from the original game) who you'll only be able to spot if you look hard enough. Finally, we've yet to see new boss Seth in action – the weapons director of bad guy Bison's Shadoloo Corporation is waiting in the wings, and apparently he's incredibly tough. (Check out the screen above.)

With the arcade version complete, the team is hard at work on the PS3 version. Proper intros and endings for each character are confirmed – each story is told through still pictures in the arcade version, but the PS3 instalment will have proper animated sequences made by an as yet unconfirmed animation studio. We saw a preview of a possible opener for Ryu and the storytelling's beautiful. It featured other characters Gen and Akuma plus Gouken, Ryu and Ken's mythical master who's never appeared in a SF game before. Will any of them appear? "There wouldn't be much point putting non-playable characters in the animation," producer Ono-san hints.

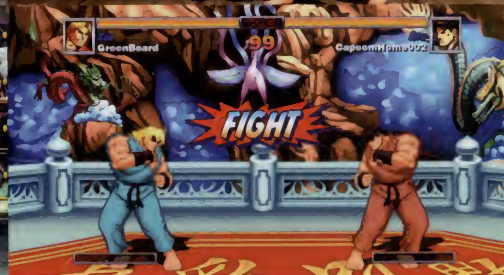
Coming home

What's certain is that Capcom will add characters for the PS3 version. They're polling players at capcom-

unity.com to see which characters from the New Challengers and Alpha sequels they'd like to see.

There's also still tweaking to be done with the game's online mode. "We can't change the laws of physics," says Ono-san, when asked about potential lag problems, "But we're sure that everyone will be able to enjoy it."

So can Street Fighter IV reinvent fighting games? Well, playing online is never going to recreate the feeling of fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with someone in a busy arcade. And for the real experience you'll have to invest in an arcade stick. But the system's easy to grasp, simple to understand and with none of the complexity that usually puts people off fighting games. So we're saying 'yes'. Roll on 2009.



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Turbo HD Remix

Street Fighter II



Still refuse to get onboard with SFIV? Don't worry, Capcom is also releasing a stunning hi-def remake of SFII via PSN



How Ryu's sparring partner Ken looked, back in the day.



HD Ken whips off a fireball. Looks great, but he's still a cheeseball.



T Hawk perfects his "me aeroplane" pose, circa 1993.



T Hawk perfects his "me aeroplane" pose, circa 2008.

When John Choi, winner of the Evo 2007 Street Fighter tournament and probably the best SF player in the world, was asked what changes he'd make to Ryu's character if he could, he thought about it for weeks. And then he gave an answer: 1. Give him a fake fireball. 2. Nothing else. This is how top-level Street Fighter players think. Ryu might seem good, but his fireball move makes him too vulnerable to lots of moves, especially Dhalsim's downward drill. With a fake – which he recovers from faster – he can trick Dhalsim into aerial moves, then Dragon Punch him senseless. Japanese players were asked what they thought of the change: they said it was genius.

That's the idea behind HD Remix.

Purists get a pixel-perfect version of Super Street Fighter: The New Challengers beautifully repainted by comic studio Udon (see left). But the techy stuff like hit-boxes – the area around a character that detects an enemy's blow – and frame counts – the specific animation time associated with a move – are unchanged. That's crucial to the legions of fans who've spent years perfecting their timings and combos, Daniel-san style. If they want, they can even play with the old eight-bit character designs, which are chunky but still adorable.

But there is progress in the shape of a 'rebalanced' mode. Drawing on 13 years of tournament fighting it's designed to make the game more fair. Top-tier characters – like Dhalsim and Balrog – are pretty much unaltered,



"The real differences are low-tier characters like Cammy."

while middling characters have been improved to balance things out. The real differences are noticeable with the low-tier characters like T Hawk, Cammy and Zangief. Changes are subtle – there aren't many new moves on a par with Ryu's fireball fake – but noticeable if you're a pro. Or if you've played SF as much as we have. Chun-Li's no longer so unstoppable, Fei Long's no longer so difficult to master and Blanka's far less... useless. It all just feels so right.

Frame by frame

While the tweaks will only register with the serious players initially, everything's far more accessible. The time window for entering, say, a Dragon Punch command has been expanded from eight to 15 frames. That means you have valuable extra fractions of a second to input the move – quarter circle twist of the stick followed by punch – reducing the chance you'll scuff it. Zangief's Spinning Piledriver and Sagat's Tiger

✓ We admire Cammy's dress sense. Her fighting skills? Not so much.



Knee don't involve upward controller movements any more, so you won't jump towards your foe if you mess up. Three-button commands can now be done with two, so they're easier to pull off on a joystick. The whole game's been redesigned by people who love and understand Street Fighter to make experts happy while reducing frustration for new people. And, of course, it'll suck them in perfectly.

After various redesigns, the characters are flawless takes on the originals, with every tricep and headband lovingly redrawn. The backgrounds are more vibrant and detailed, but they're still full of cheeky jokes – check out the US Airforce personnel interfering with each other on Guile's stage. Even the music's been remixed – instead of guitar power rock, there's cheesy Vegas lounge rock on Balrog's stage and hip-hop inspired flamenco in Spain. It's SFII reimagined, re-engineered, and tweaked to bring it bang up to date. And it's beautiful.

Q&A

SFII HD producer Rey Jimenez



What's the biggest change in the Remixed edition? Are any fighters much tougher or weaker now?

All of the changes that we're doing are intended to be very minor. Aside from a few cases like Ryu's fake fireball, most of the changes are very hard to spot for most casual players. Super Turbo is already a very balanced game and many of the changes we've done were very little timing and movement changes to alleviate some minor gripes, many of which come from the Tournament pros. The goal was to make some of the weaker characters a little more effective and take some of the overpowered and abused characters down a little.

Who did you consult when you did the rebalancing?

David Sirlin, the lead designer on the project, is a very accomplished tournament player of the original Super Turbo. He created a list of changes he would like to do, taken from his own ideas and polled from many of the pros. These are then implemented and extensively play tested internally. A few times during development, the top players have flown in and done long play sessions to make sure we get fresh eyes on the changes. They have been very successful and the overall feeling is that the game has become more fun to play.

Some of Street Fighter II's endings – like Zangief's – might seem outdated now, and others – like Blanka's – are just crazy. Are you changing these?

Good question! We are, in fact, making some of the exact changes you are listing above and a few more. The changes are still very much in line with the Street Fighter story, but some details are changed slightly to make them more contemporary.

Udon were quite open with their redesigns of the characters. Have they made any changes in response to fan criticism?

It's been a long haul, but yes, there have been some changes that we've implemented based on feedback. When we first started the project, we very much opened the doors to feedback. That's kinda slowed down so we can have time to make the changes.

Who's your favourite character from the Street Fighter series, and why?

I've always liked Charlie/Guile. For some reason, that archetype of character has always struck a chord with me, and I like change characters.

What's the change you're most pleased with in the game?

I personally haven't extensively tested all of the changes yet, but the one I have and am finding the most use out of is Ryu's fake fireball. It's great for mind games. I have bread and butter combos that end with a fireball that I do fairly often and it becomes predictable after a while and starts getting blocked. So once in a while, if my opponent is blocking my combos, instead of ending with a fireball, I'll end with a fake fireball. The quick recovery will give me the time while they are blocking to simply walk up and throw them. It's pretty evil when someone isn't expecting it.



Classic Characters

The men - and woman - who define the Street Fighter tournament, past and present

Chun Li

First appearance Street Fighter II: The World Warrior
Best move Spinning Bird Kick (↓, ↑ + kick)
Fighting to avenge her dearly departed dad, the self-proclaimed strongest woman in the world mainly does it by showcasing her enormous thighs. Interesting fact: in Super Street Fighter II, she was the only character to get optional endings: she could either carry on working for Interpol, or 'Go back to being a young, single girl'. In SF-land, that's practically feminism.

Ryu/Ken

First appearance Street Fighter
Best move The Dragon Punch (→, ↓, ↓ + punch)
Simple. Classic. Brilliant. Ryu and best pal Ken are the only two characters to have appeared in every single Street Fighter. Ken's the showboater - his Hurricane Kick's faster - but Ryu's superior technique means that every one of his attacks will knock you down.

M Bison

First appearance Street Fighter II: The World Warrior
Best move Psycho Crusher (Charge ←, → + punch)
Known as 'Dictator' to tournament regulars in Japan, M Bison's the leader of a crime syndicate called Shadoloo. He supposedly got involved in the fighting scene as a way of recruiting talent to take over the world.



Street Fighter (1987, arcade)

The first game introduces Ryu, Ken and Sagat - and the classic 'fireball' motion - but is practically broken. Brilliantly, in some arcades you actually have to punch pressure-pads to indicate how hard you want your strikes to be. Given such uninspired beginnings, not even a lunatic could have predicted that within five years this would inspire the greatest fighting game of all time. Speaking of which...



The history of Street Fighter

A rundown of the most influential games in the series, from 1987 to the present day





Alex

First appearance Street Fighter III
Best move Hyper Bomb (360° spin + punch)
Originally designed as the star of Street Fighter II, Alex was forced to take a back seat when Ryu and Ken returned by player request. He's sort of based on once-legendary WWF wrestler Hulk Hogan - in-game rival Hugo's clearly based on Hogan's '80s rival, Andre The Giant - and after semi-naked boss Gill, who's beaten up his dad.

Guile

First appearance Street Fighter II: The World Warrior
Best move Sonic Boom (←, → + punch)
The archetypal avenging American hero, Guile's pal Charlie - who actually competes in the Alpha series - was killed by Bison in Cambodia, prompting the vest-loving marine to Sonic Boom a path of destruction through to the finals. Even though he's one of the toughest characters in early versions of the game, he's been weakening steadily - and his hair isn't big enough in SFIV.



Akuma

First appearance Super Street Fighter II Turbo Edition
Best move Aerial fireball (Jump, ↓, ↓, → + punch)
The God Of Fighting originally appeared as a near-unbeatable secret character in Super SFII - he's so powerful that Japanese players had a gentleman's agreement never to 'be' him. Now toned down, he's still one of the toughest characters, having - supposedly - killed Ryu and Ken's master with his energy-bar-smashing Instant Hell Murder.



The Hall Of Shame

What the hell was Capcom thinking when they invented these oddballs?

Rolento

(Street Fighter Alpha 3)
The tournament's organisers might have looked the other way when Vega walked in with a sharpened metal claw, but Rolento habitually uses a stick, throws grenades or knives... and garottes people with a piano-wire noose held by his terrorist associates. Come on, that's sort of cheating.



Oro

(Street Fighter III)
A 140-year-old hermit who lives in a cave in the Amazon and keeps one arm tied behind his back so he doesn't accidentally kill his opponent, which is perhaps a good life lesson for us all. Oro is looking for an apprentice who he can pass his fighting style onto. Because, let's face it, it's an appealing lifestyle.



Skullomania

(Street Fighter EX)
A disillusioned Japanese salaryman - his name's Saburo Nishikoyama - forced by his bosses to dress up as a skeleton for a department store carnival, Skullo liked the attention, decided to become a vigilante, and then found his way into the Street Fighter tournament. Of course he did.



Area

(Street Fighter EX2)
What's a little girl with robo-skates and a mechanical arm doing in the tournament? She's been sent by her inventor father to test his latest devices. He's told her that all the other fighters are robots. There's no child protection register in Fighter land, apparently.



Street Fighter II: The World Warrior

(1991, arcade)
The game that started the madness. Only eight characters are available, combos do enormous damage and Guile is almost unbeatable. Instantly loved the world over.



Street Fighter II: Champion Edition

(1992, arcade)
The four bosses (Balrog, Vega, Sagat, M Bison) are unlocked and new outfits make Ryu-on-Ryu matches a possibility. Guile's even tougher, making him the closest thing SF has to a cheat character.



Continued over



Fighting Hard

Never played Street Fighter before? Here's what you need to get to grips with straight away

Two-In-Ones

The most basic sort of combo. Certain moves – like Ryu's Crouching Roundhouse or Guile's standing fierce punch – can be 'cancelled' by a special move, meaning that the special will cut off their last few frames of animation, so that if the first hit connects, so will the second. Once you've learned the basic two-in-ones, you can start working on chaining them with aerial attacks for more dangerous combos. See how Ryu does it on the right.



Here Ryu's landed his crouching hard attack – an uppercut – on Ken. But he moves straight into the very recognisable fireball movement...



...and instead of the last few frames of the uppercut, a fireball comes straight out. This is one of Street Fighter II's most basic combos.

Crossups

076

If you do a jumping attack that lands you just on the other side of your opponent, that's a crossup. They're best done against players who are getting up, and they're tricky to defend against – whether the other player needs to block left or right depends on the exact distance they're landing at. It's a bit of a gamble, but if you get the timing and range right, the odds are stacked in your favour – and a deep enough hit can open up a potentially match-winning combo.



Bison's throw lands him at the perfect range for a crossup attack. Depending whether he goes for a medium or fierce kick, the opponent needs to block in different directions....



...and if he guesses wrong, Bison will land the move and plant him with a combo. It's possible to Dragon Punch out of this sort of thing, but the timing's incredibly difficult.

'Meaty' attacks

A weird little quirk of the Street Fighter II fighting system is that, if you attack your opponent just as they're getting up, you can catch them with the last few frames of the move you're making. Sometimes this will let you create unexpected combos; at others, it enables you to play it safe. For instance, if you time a slow fireball to connect just as your opponent stands, they'll be forced to block – and you've got time to get another fireball in with no risk of them blocking it.



Normally there's no way Chunners can combo a crouching forward kick into a standing fierce punch. But if she times the kick so that it's coming out as Blanka stands up....



...only the last few frames of the kick connect, leaving her free to go straight into the punch. Experiment with these to see what else works.

Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting

(1992, arcade)
The game becomes more balanced: Dhalsim gets a teleport, Chun Li gets a fireball, and Honda gets a splash, although they all use existing frames of animation. Play is also slightly faster.



Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers

(1993, arcade)
Four new fighters debut – amnesiac Brit-chick Cammy, native American T Hawk, Bruce Lee impersonator Fei Long and maraca-shaking Jamaican Dee Jay. Guess which was Capcom America's first go at making a character?



Super Street Fighter II: Turbo Edition

(1994, arcade)
Super combos are introduced, juggling is allowed and stupidly-hard new character Akuma is unlockable – either as an opponent or by entering a complicated cheat code. Violent attacks in Japanese arcades almost certainly go up.





Reversals

The best way to get out of a 'meaty' attack - or a crossup - is to do a reversal, or a move that's invincible as soon as it starts up. Ryu's Dragon Punch, Vega's Backflip and Dee Jay's Flying Kick are all immune to being hit in their first few frames of animation, so if you can go into them as soon as you stand up, you'll be unharmed by whatever your opponent does. Needless to say timing is crucial, and this is a tactic experts use regularly - so you'll want to master it when HD Remix goes live.



Ken's on the floor and Ryu's coming in with a jumping crossup attack. This looks like it can only end badly for our foppishly haired friend...



...but Ken times it right and goes straight into a Dragon Punch as he stands. The first four frames of the move are invincible, so he goes through Ryu's kick and bashes him.

Press the advantage

The most important thing about competitive Street Fighter is not getting psyched out and involved in opponents' head games. Certain players will moan about you cheating, but if you're at the right range to trap your opponent into getting hit, you need to press the advantage and wallop them. (They'd do the exact same thing to you.) You don't have to do it all the time, but you need to learn when you can pull the nasty stuff out of your bag of tricks and win.



Here Ryu's got Honda trapped in the corner, and is fireballing him senseless. Honda has basically one option here: jump over the fireball...



...which lets Ryu walk up and leg sweep him as he lands. It's rare that you'll get in this situation, but when you do you need to abuse it mercilessly.

Throw Pressure

Street Fighter is all about range and hit rectangles. What some newbies fail to understand is that while flashy moves like fireballs and Dragon Punches are great fun to pull off - and need to be mastered if you're going to win more matches than you lose against other human players - bread and butter holds and close moves are just as important. If you can put enough pressure on your opponent and force them to block, you can get within range of them for a throw.



Zangief's crouching strong kick comes out fast and does huge damage. Shuffle forward and backwards using it, and eventually your opponents will start blocking low...



...giving you a tiny window of opportunity to walk up and throw them. The Spinning Piledriver is one of the best ways to do this, because it's got the longest range in the game.

Street Fighter Alpha: Warriors' Dreams

(1995, arcade)

The super combo system is revamped to feature three levels of gauge. Because it's a prequel, new characters include Guile's dead-by-SFII friend Charlie, alongside Guy and Sodom from Final Fight.



Street Fighter Alpha 2

(1996, arcade)

Custom combos - really fast moves that drain the Super gauge - are introduced. This game also sees the arrival of popular schoolgirl character Sakura, and much-less-popular old man Gen. Zangief and Dhalsim return, and an evil version of Ryu is also controversially included.



Street Fighter EX

(1996, arcade)

SF goes 3D, EX uses almost the same 2D movement as the earlier games. New developer Arika invents some of the series' most ridiculous characters and adds a Guard Break for a completely forgettable game. Skullomania (see p.75) debuts. Boo!



Continued over



Hall of Fame

Meet the elite competition players you definitely don't want to meet in a dark arcade



Justin Wong

In action snipurl.com/3U4hl
There's a touch of always-the-bridesmaid about perennial top-ten finisher Wong - his punishing Chun-Li poke game is feared, but he never quite puts it together in finals. He's still a tough test for anyone, though, and has a decent game with Balrog.



John Choi

In action snipurl.com/3U4hjw
Winner of the Evolution tournament - America's most prestigious fighting game event - in 2006, John Choi's one of the game's most influential players. He's rarely out of the top five in any tournament he plays in, and has a terrifying game with Guile.

Daigo 'The Beast' Umehara

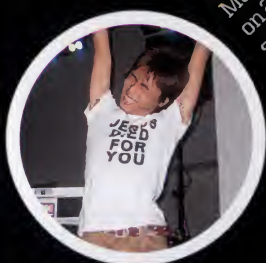
In action snipurl.com/3U4aoz
Made a name for himself with a 286-game winning streak on 2D scrapper Night Warriors, then burst onto the world stage by defeating Alex Valle during an official SF Alpha 3 world championship in 1998 - creating a legion of copycat Akuma players with a vicious Demon Flip combo.

Alex Valle

In action snipurl.com/3U4aty
A Southern California player considered practically unbeatable on Street Fighter Alpha series' run in the tournament scene, sometimes disapproved of by Japanese players for his win-at-all-costs play style. Came third in Street Fighter III during the Evo 2K7 tournament, mostly playing as Ryu and Sagat.

Nuki

In action snipurl.com/3U4aus
First place finisher in the Evo 2K7 tournament at SF III - a feat which he pulled off without losing a single game. He also managed to scrape seventh in Street Fighter II Turbo, while putting in a respectable performance to take third place in Virtua Fighter. What a guy.



Street Fighter III

(1997, arcade)
After originally planning to introduce an entirely new character roster, SFIII's designers cave after playtesters complain, and bring back Ryu and Ken. Later rejigs, 2nd Impact and 3rd Strike, introduce half a dozen new characters.



Street Fighter Alpha 3

(1998, arcade)
Things get confusing with the introduction of 'isms' - allowing different fighting styles from the previous two Alpha games. Also introduced are lady-wrestler Rainbow Mika, and M Bison's bodyguards Juni and Juli, while Cody from Final Fight makes his SF debut.



Street Fighter EX 2

(1998, arcade)
EX 2 borrows the Custom Combos from Street Fighter Alpha, and adds a couple of new characters, including a super-powered version of Bison who is creatively named... Bison 2. The cast list now numbers 27, but the trouble is it's still rubbish.





1

Both players start out conservatively. Chun-Li (Wong) takes a huge advantage with two super moves.



2

Ken (Daigo) rallies, but Chun-Li continues to land shots. Finally, she launches a super combo.

See it here: snipurl.com/34aei

Best fight ever!

Daigo Vs Wong, Evo '04: the most dramatic comeback in SF history



3

It looks like curtains – but Daigo parries Chun-Li's kicks again and again, with flawless timing.



4

Unbelievably Daigo parries every kick – more than 15 in about three seconds. Suddenly, he's back in it.



5

Instead of taking the soft option, he risks it all by going for a flashy super-combo finish of his own...



6

...which is unheard of in tournament conditions. Ken wins and the crowd, quite rightly, explodes.

Q&A

SFIV consultant
Seth Killian



You used to be a big name on the competition scene. What's the fight you're proudest of?

Used to be, huh? Tell that to all the people I still beat every year. I'm not allowed to win money in our tournaments anymore, but I still won some qualifying events and got ninth place [the highest allowed placing, since top eight win money] at the Evo World Finals the last two years in a row. To actually answer the question, my personal highlight was a ten-game set against Japanese champion Daigo Umehara – my Chun-Li vs his Ryu. Every matchup in Street Fighter has – I dunno how to describe it – an idealized shape. A platonic form? I lost, but the matches were played almost perfectly. We both did everything just right, and there was just this magical high that flowed from playing the perfect match.

Who's your favourite character?

I think Ryu is still one of the most enduringly awesome character designs of all time. I like him because he has all the tools to beat anyone, even though in most versions he's not actually the top-ranked character.

We've heard you play with your hands crossed over on the sticks. Why?

Stubbornness. I used to play a lot of Ms Pac-Man as a little kid. I used my right hand to control the joystick, and when I moved to SF, I didn't see any reason to switch.

How do you feel SF measures up to other modern-day fighters like Tekken and VF?

Those are both great games, but I think Street Fighter is still setting the bar, both visually and in terms of gameplay. I've written books on this question, but a lot of it comes down to SF's really unique character designs, the delicate back-and-forth possible with Street Fighter's subtle movement and spacing, and the role of fireballs to open up multiple vectors of attack.

What advice would you give players who want to prepare for Street Fighter IV?

Don't sleep on the Focus attacks. SFIV is great because even if you haven't played in years, you can pick up and play using SFII-style tactics right away. However this really is a new game, so while you can play it like SFII, taking full advantage of new core elements like the Focus attacks not only makes it more fun, it will be key to winning long-term.

If you could pick any character from any of the old games to return as downloadable content who would it be?

I'm a classicist, so I love all the variations of the Shotokan fighters. I also used to play exhibition money-matches using Dan in Alpha 2, and so I'd love to see the return of the pink gi. If they bring back Skullomania, however, I quit.

Street Fighter EX 3

(2001, PS2)

For the first Street Fighter game on PS2, developer Arika has a brainwave – nick the tag-team play from Marvel Vs Capcom 2. This actually works better than Tekken Tag Tournament, released at almost exactly the same time. A triumphant return of sorts.



Competition

We've got 30 sets of three Street Fighter Remix #0 comics to give away thanks to Udon, who kindly supplied art for this feature. To be in with a chance of winning answer this question: Who is Ken and Ryu's master? Is it a) Gouken, b) Gordon, c) Mr Miyagi. To enter, text Street then A, B or C to 87874 followed by your name and address, or enter at futurecomps.co.uk/psn23sf. Comp open from 26 August to 30 September 08. See p.39 for T&Cs.

lastnext...

Back issues

There's no need to miss out



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World exclusive 007: Quantum Of Solace first look, all-new Tomb Raider Underworld shots, the secrets of GTA IV... And meet the *real* Niko.



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17-page shooters special, Battlefield: Bad Company review, new Sony boss talks to OPM, and exclusive looks at inFamous, PES 2009 and Resi 5.



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Our review code is tested on hi-def and standard-def TVs to ensure we know how games perform at both ends of the scale. Our HD setup is a 70" Sony Bravia with Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.

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Reviews

Your essential guide to every new release

Two huge exclusives for you this month – blockbusting arcade destruction courtesy of Pandemic's South American romp *Mercenaries 2*, and the world first review of the hugely anticipated *FIFA 09*. Why hugely anticipated? Because last year the football series was, to put it mildly, in a bad place, struggling to come to terms with next gen tech and scraping a sad 6/10. But the huge improvements in mid-season update Euro 2008 convinced us that new *FIFA* could be something special. Turn over to see why it's been keeping us up all hours.

It's a great time to be a PS3 sports fan, with big scores also coming in for Madden NFL 09 and NHL 09, balanced by so so showings for Tiger Woods and NBA Live 09. (And let's just pretend Facebreaker never happened.). We round things off with a re-review of the woefully tardy *Rock Band* and an online test for *Race Driver Grid*. Enjoy this month's reviews, brought to you by the letters E and A, and the number nine.



82

FIFA 09

The beautiful presentation is pretty much a given, but the real story is that *FIFA 09* plays a really good game of football. But is it a Pro Evo-killer?



88

RATCHET & CLANK: QUEST FOR BOOTY

They're back! Well, he's back. Ratchet goes on the hunt for sidekick Clank in a short but sweet downloadable adventure.



90

MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

Featuring three kickass characters and enough firepower to turn a developing nation into a pile of smouldering ashes.

How we score our reviews...

10 Essential

Instant classic that's as close as it gets to PlayStation perfection.

9 Outstanding

Highly recommended, and an investment you won't regret.

8 Very good

Mostly excellent, but held back by one or two minor flaws.

7 Good

Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement. Rent it first.

6 Reasonable

A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Average

A game that is both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Below average

Too flawed to be anything more than a brief curiosity.

3 Poor

A seriously flawed game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful

A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it as you would a bullet.

1 Horrific

Buy this shocker and watch your console self-combust in protest.

**GOLD
AWARD**
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Our highest accolade

The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics and long-lasting appeal.

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW**
PlayStation.
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Be A Pro returns with a new season mode that sees you signing for a big club of your choice. Or Tottenham.

Form player

FIFA 09

EA's resurgent football giant turns the tables on PES

There's a theory which I just made up which goes something like this: the whole FIFA and PES rivalry is a huge, destructive delusion that's a bit like trying to talk French. Hear me out. The main thrust of this theory is that both games are, and for the most part have always been, really good. But fans of one tend to energetically dislike the other. Why? Because speaking French is hard. Or, in other words, because when you're used to one, playing the other is like trying to speak another language. And being bilingual is unusual, so people stick to what they know and write rude words on internet forums about what they don't. The point is: this year, both FIFA and PES promise to be such huge improvements over last year's efforts that everyone who's ever played and enjoyed either should stop the ranting and try going a bit continental. Ça va? Allons-y...

If there's a theme to this year's FIFA,

Dev talk



"For me, the changes we're making are about realism. The AI is vastly improved."

David Rutter
Line producer,
EA Vancouver

it's control. An incredible level of customisation runs through the game: detailed options in the creation of your Be A Pro player, totally flexible button setups, the ability to change the angle and zoom of the in-game camera, power gauges for every kick of the ball, and a brand new set of tactical settings which determine the shape of your team. It's bewildering at first, as there are more options here than you'll ever use, but it stops you thinking about all the niggly stuff – 'I wish I could run with **R1** like in PES', 'I want this style of camera but a little wider' – and lets you get on with the football. It's like the game's been turned inside out and laid totally bare for you to fiddle with, fine tune, and then play.

The big kick-off

And how does it play? It picks up where EA's mid-season event spin-off Euro 2008 left off – literally, as part of EA's



Info

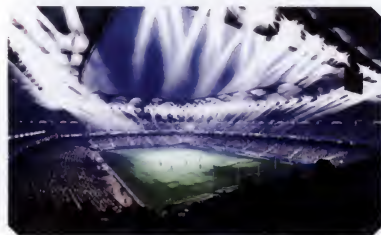
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EA Dev EA PLAYERS 1-20 Web
fifa09.ea.com It's like Playing
last year's FIFA but with oil
liberally applied to all the
creaking bits.

next-gen improvement strategy was to create a single, continuous gameplay team who would constantly update the core engine. As a result FIFA 09 has a lively, bouncy feel. There's a snap to the ball when it skims off the grass, and there's a realistic sense of weight and momentum when players bring it under control. More than anything, it feels independent and *live*. In a change which revolutionised PS2 football games from FIFA 07 onwards and that has now belatedly made the leap to PS3, the ball is no longer tied to player animation, but instead treated as an independent object. (Yes, I know it sounds obvious.) That, coupled with the physics tweaks made here, add up to its movement feeling more natural and spontaneous than ever.

At times, of course, this can be frustrating. Players are more likely to miscontrol the ball with their first touch, and sometimes the midfield



▲ Your chosen team's derby rivals are the default opposition in exhibition mode – with Milan, it's Inter.



▲ Hamburg's ground is one of the real-life stadia, which also include Wembley and Anfield.



▲ The shadows on the pitch in some grounds looks ace but can make it a pain to see the ball.

can degenerate into a scrapheap of sliced passes, shin glances and slide tackles, especially during your first few settling-in matches. But mostly it just makes for a really organic-feeling game of football.

All kicks of the ball are now charged with a power bar – not just shots and looped passes, as is usually the case with both FIFA and Pro Evo, but also short passes and through balls. This takes a bit of getting used to, but it's worth it. Inevitably it means taking a fraction of a second longer to get some passes away, especially if you're charging up a longer ball, but the game compensates for this by registering button presses unusually

early. This forces you to be a bit more careful with how you handle the Sixaxis – urgently hammering \otimes to put in a tackle or because you're desperate to knock a 50-50 ball to a team-mate often results in kicking possession away. The other side of the coin is that with a bit of planning and foresight it you can judge passes early and accurately.

And more than that, giving control over to the player means the game opens up in realistic ways that virtual football is rarely able to capture. Slight over-hits are now pretty common, with balls sliding away from players and forcing them to change direction or even run back



▲ Little Cesc's stats have shot up after his incredible 07/08.

around on themselves. This can be agonising – like when a slanted through ball *just* fails to connect with an on-rushing winger – but it can also unexpectedly prise open defences who themselves over commit. More importantly, it feels like you can genuinely put the ball wherever you want, so long as you have time and space and the right player to do it. Old versions of both PES

New signings tested



SAMIR NASRI

Best suited to playing out wide on the right. We pushed Walcott up alongside boo-boy favourite Adebayor to make room in the side. It worked, sort of.



LUKA MODRIC

At the time of writing Spurs' deal for Arshavin has stalled, so we stuck Luka in behind Bent as a support striker, plugging the gap Keane left in the team.



DECO

Fits best into the Chelsea side if you axe Frank Lampard, which suits us fine. Sits in the hole just in front of Essien and behind Drogba. Scored in his PS3 debut.



ROBBIE KEANE

Allows Liverpool to play a genuine 4-4-2 with Keane up top alongside Torres. Can also drop behind or even play out wide to let Stevie G play through the middle.



RONALDINHO

We put him on the left wing with license to roam infield. Real Ronny may have lost his edge, but as a cover star his in-game stats are still strong.



and FIFA have been guilty of guiding play too heavily in the final third of the pitch, with automated through balls always seeming to reach the goalie just a fraction ahead of your strikers, and lofted long passes that drop onto the back four or straight into the opposition keeper's hands, but never in the sweet spot in between. Now there's a sense that you can exploit the whole pitch, so long as you pick the right ball, dinking it over the defenders with a lobbed through pass (the nicked from PES combo of **U** plus **A**), pushing it right out to the flanks with a charged kick, or just getting lucky with a flick-on or ricochet. The point is that it feels like the authentic and untampered result of a complex physics and football machine set in motion.

Touch and release

Helping to keep the game flowing is the fact that the touch and turn of players is much quicker now, especially if you use the right stick to guide your first touch.



▲ Free kicks are very scoreable, and can be practised in the menu screen arena.

That was the biggest problem with FIFA 08 – getting your men to knock it past a defender or simply pivot on the ball was like having one of those nightmares where your legs turn to treacle sponge as the serial killer closes in. But now it's much more responsive. With the movement of the ball so natural, the sensation of knocking it from one player to the next – pass, touch, turn, pass – is satisfying and enjoyable in itself.

The arena
FIFA's menu kickabout returns with new locations, and a sexy fade into the match setting. Incredibly atmospheric.

Build up play
Spreading the ball about and cracking defences is just brilliantly playable, especially with sharp AI support runs.

The reducer
The whole area of contact has been reworked with realistic jostling and acrobatic tumbling animation for brutally fouled players.

Be A Pro
Expanded from one-off matches into a time-sink career mode, FIFA's killer innovation is stronger than ever.

LOVING

Goal drought
Build up play's brilliant, but actually scoring can be a bit of a mare. Keepers are strong and it takes work to crack defences.

HATING

It's made even better by the fact that the pressure and positioning of the opposing teams is unusually good. Try to hold possession at the back and they'll press menacingly onto your back four; work it up the middle and they'll squeeze up man to man in midfield. The result is that you find yourself naturally recreating patterns of passing and movement that you see all the time in real football because that's the best way to move the defence around and probe for an opening – the fullback knocking it up the line to the winger who gives it straight back as his marker closes him down, short, square passes among the back four, or little reverse balls in midfield slid behind an oncoming defender.

What all this means is that build-up play is the best part of the game. It feels like you're really *constructing* something, slashing turf-trimming balls across the park and making tight little give and go triangles in the middle with subtle touches of **X** and **A**. Tight turning and the precision gauges mean you can work the ball in unusually cramped spaces, especially since the support runs from your AI teammates are a huge improvement over last year – they now break forward with real purpose, pointing to where they want the ball played.

The going gets tougher as you get further up the pitch, but it doesn't feel ➤



❑ Call for the ball in Be A Pro and – unlike in stupid real life – your teammates always pass.



❑ It's easier to pull off tricks with technically gifted players like Del Piero than, say, Titus Bramble.



❑ You can edit replays in-game and upload them along with screenshots to the EA servers.

unfair, just right. The natural balance swings as you get nearer the opposition's box, with less space to play in and more defenders pressing. You might occasionally nick the ball from the other team in their half, but it's more likely that possession will switch as play gets stretched at either end of the field, giving games a natural ebb and flow. That's not to say that one team can't get on top – give away the ball too easily, or soak up the pressure for too long and you'll struggle for a way out. FIFA 09 recreates the sense of being under siege in your penalty box like no other game – whole stretches of some matches develop into a pattern of repeat corners and lumped clearances to the halfway line which come straight back. This happens against both human players and in AI matches, so presumably it's a natural

❑ Over 500 licensed teams feature from across Europe, Australasia, America and Asia.

effect of the way the passing and player behaviour is structured. Whatever – it's another step forward in terms of realism, and makes for some really tense passages of play.

Tactical substitution

There are a few other tweaks to the nuts and bolts gameplay. The skills system, activated by holding **L2** and moving the

right stick, now feels more deliberate and practical. Thanks to the context-sensitive direction controls – you need to move the stick differently depending on which way your player's facing – pulling out the more complex tricks when you're under any kind of pressure still feels like trying to rub your tummy while juggling chainsaws. But doing the simple stuff, like rolling your foot over the ball by holding the stick left or right, is easier than before, and with the improved player responsiveness is more effective at wrong-footing markers and getting out of tight spaces.

The physical side of the game has also been updated and improved. Mostly you only notice this when a heavy sliding challenge produces one of the spectacular new tumbling animations – players arcing through the air and rolling on the grass – but it makes the whole area of player contact more nuanced, with momentum and strength coming into play when jostling for the ball.





▲ Torres comes complete with yellow boots, flowing hair and glorious flashing smile. Sigh.



▲ There are tons of new player contact animations for fouls and niggly challenges.



▲ Players now slide automatically when running shoulder to shoulder for 50-50 challenges.

"Be A Pro mode has unquestionably effected the balance of power with archrival Pro Evo."


Entirely new this year is the team tactics system. Basically this is a more complex version of the kind of stuff PES has been doing for years with player mentality and offensive/defensive settings. It breaks team behaviour down into the three key areas – build-up, chance creation and defence – with three further settings in each category, like speed of passing or a choice of freeform or organised positioning. The shape and behaviour of the rest of your team changes to fit whatever combination you come up with. Opt for a long ball strategy and your strikers will push up looking for passes thumped from the back, or push the cross frequency up and they'll try to make runs into the six-yard area as much as possible.

That's the theory, anyway. In practice, it's often hard to tell whether it's having any effect – in the standard single player mode you have so much influence over play, especially if you pull players around using one-two passes or hold **Ⓢ** to call extra defenders into challenges, that the impact is often lost. Where it comes into its own is FIFA's increasingly influential Be A Pro mode, where you're tied to a single man and the match plays out around you. From a throwaway sideshow last year, Be A Pro has



become an industry standard – it now features in several of EA's other titles, and more significantly it's even imitated in PES 2009's new 'Be A Legend' mode (see p27). Make no mistake about it, EA created something new and special here last year, and it has built on it in FIFA 09 by expanding it into a stats-building career mode. Like PES's genius Master League, the attraction is that every match makes you just a little bit better, which keeps driving you on to the next one, and the next. The only sad thing is that all too soon you run out of games – currently, the mode only lasts four seasons, rather than a full career.

The big feature being trumpeted by EA this year is Be A Pro's ten against ten online mode, featuring games where every outfield player is human controlled. We won't be able to try it out properly until release, but the thing is, even if it's a mess – and, judging by last year's five on five mode, it won't be – it's still an example of what FIFA is doing correctly. There's just so much *stuff* here – innovations, common sense touches, user-friendly options. The core of the game has moved on considerably, to



2up

second opinion

Name Ben Wilson
Angle Pro Evo loyalist

"Last year I scored FIFA 08 a 6/10 and some of you lot went crackers. But, abusive emails aside, I was right. The shooting was bull and the only way you could beat a man was by holding **Ⓢ** and performing 17 consecutive rotations of the right stick. Now those problems have been fixed, and the rest has fallen into place beautifully; this is a belter. Although, for me, still not a PES-beater. Go on then, get writing."

Best for...
The open-minded footy fan

the point where it currently plays the best game of football on PS3, but what's really impressive is the way it's improved.

EA has responded to the criticisms of FIFA 08, and built upon the game's strengths. In terms of presentation – kits, commentary and sexy graphics – FIFA's always been streets ahead of archrival PES, and that's still the case here. Combine that with the emergence of the now-essential Be A Pro and the balance of power has definitely shifted. When was the last time Konami's critical darling played catch-up? It seemed unthinkable a couple of years ago. The bottom line is that this is a brilliantly presented, fluidly playable game of football overflowing with new features. Over to you, Pro Evo. **Nathan Dittum**





There's no time wasted in this four-hour fun blast – you'll be grinding massive rail sections within seconds of starting.

Essential bolt-on

Ratchet & Clank Quest For Booty

Proving that big things download in small packages



Info

Format PSN
Download ETA
September Pub Sony
Dev Insomniac
Players 1 Web
snip url.com/3710h
It's like Your PS3 is a sofa and you found an extra Ratchet level while rummaging in the cushions.

This is a hot holiday fling of a game. A brief flash of fun that's over almost before it begins, leaving you thrilled it happened and sad it ended. Oh, the memories: the brilliant platforming, the entertaining puzzles, picking the sand out of our... no, wait, wrong memory. It may be short – at four hours you'll nail it in one sitting – but that's the point. It's just enough to fill an evening, and the brevity means there's not an ounce of slack: every moment is a gem; every level is a set-piece.

The download consists of a chapter-sized sequel-cum-epilogue to the

brilliant Tools Of Destruction. Clank's been kidnapped by the Zoni and Ratchet's out to find him. Don't expect any recycled environments or familiar baddies tainted with the sour taste of déjà vu, though. Quest For Booty is packed with new locations and, better still, fresh ideas.

Tooling around

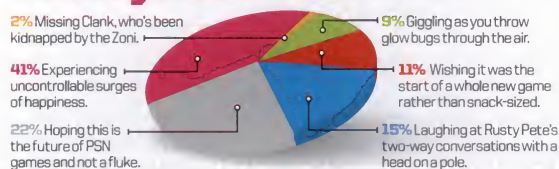
Ratchet's wrench has been upgraded. Using an electrical tether now enables you to manipulate objects from a distance. You can move platforms to create paths or set catapults to jump to new areas. It's brilliantly intuitive, instantly feeling like a regular part of Ratchet's armoury. You can also pick things up for the first time. There are glowing grubs that act as torches, lighting up dingy caverns and driving away bitey-mouthed bats that attack in the dark. The best example is a rail-grinding sequence early on. As you slide along a series of pipes, jumping gaps and

electrical barriers, you have to scoop up volcanic rocks to throw ahead and smash open doors. This one sequence sums up the game: short, simple, beautifully designed and full of smiles.

The brilliant gunplay from Tools Of Destruction is still present, albeit in a reduced capacity. Almost half the game is played with no weapons at all. But with evil pirate ghost Captain Darkwater and his crew trying to stop Ratchet, there's still plenty to blast. The choice of guns is smaller, though, and there's little in the way of upgrades. Bolts in particular don't serve much purpose – there's no armour to buy so you mostly spend them on mission-specific items: machinery needed for repairs, for example.

The real emphasis in Booty is on platforming and solving puzzles to progress. The opening level has you fixing a series of wind turbines. Each one is a challenge in its own right – a collection of towers, covered in traps,

What you do in... Ratchet





While Clank's missing, Talwyn's around to keep Ratchet company.



The wrench is your primary weapon for much of Booty. Mmm... fresh crab.

that need to be negotiated to reach the summit. Later on you'll be jumping between the keys of a giant organ to play melodies, or mixing boozes for a bad tempered barman. The variety and regular changes of pace ensure you never get bored.

One-shot thrill

One of the things that *Insomniac* has pitched perfectly is that it's not too hard. It's just challenging enough to be fun and engaging without ever becoming frustrating. You'll never want to put the pad down, just suck up the action relentlessly until the credits roll (complete with a teaser for the next instalment). There are a couple of duff checkpoints but if it feels like they send you back too far, it's only because the small levels are so tightly packed with stuff to do. Another minor criticism is that the more compact locations sporadically mess up the camera, filling the screen with a rogue wall or the floor if you back too far into a corner.

Throughout though, everything is lavished with love and attention. There are beautifully

dense, colourful and lively environments that never feel as cheap as the price tag might suggest. It's funny as well. The script is excellent, crackling with wit and only occasionally let down by some wooden cut-scene animation. Rusty Pete, Captain Slag's former sidekick, puts in a star turn as a liquor-sozzled mess who, full of grief for his dead skipper, spends much of his time talking to Slag's head on a stick. The Smuggler, on the other hand, feels a bit like a shoehorned afterthought, spending most of the game trying to justify his inclusion.

But you simply can't go wrong with *Quest For Booty*. For those who loved the last game, it's a brilliant treat; a chance for one last blast while we wait for a full-blown sequel. For newcomers it's an inexpensive way to discover what they've been missing out on. And it doesn't matter if you've never played the series

before because the story is self-contained. Whoever you are, there's no excuse not to play this. So, it turns out less really is more – who knew, right? **Leon Hurley**



BluMovies

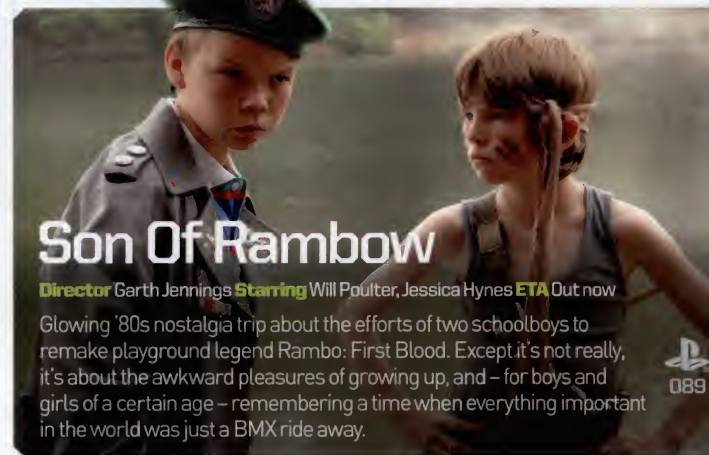
HD films to feed your next-gen disc player



10,000 BC

Director Roland Emmerich Starring Steven Strait, Camilla Belle ETA Out now

Oh my God. OH MY GOD. Check out snipurl.com/3440s for just a few of the reasons why this caveman on a quest film is absolute rubbish. Example: our hairy hero makes 'friends' with a sabre tooth tiger who doesn't eat him instantly. Oh, and all the mammoths are apparently played by Sesame Street's Mr Snuffleupagus.



Son Of Rambow

Director Garth Jennings Starring Will Poulter, Jessica Hynes ETA Out now

Glowing '80s nostalgia trip about the efforts of two schoolboys to remake playground legend *Rambo: First Blood*. Except it's not really, it's about the awkward pleasures of growing up, and – for boys and girls of a certain age – remembering a time when everything important in the world was just a BMX ride away.



Total Recall

Director Paul Verhoeven Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael Ironside ETA Out now

Verhoeven – the brilliant mad Dutchman behind *Robocop* and *Starship Troopers* – brings the same mix of cynical smarts and balls-out blockbusting to this Philip K Dick adaptation about memory implants and secret agents on Mars. The then-cutting edge effects have aged a little, but this is still one of Arnie's best – and weirdest – films.



Movie of the month

No Country For Old Men

Director Joel Coen Starring Javier Bardem, Josh Brolin ETA 8 Sep

Slow-burn Western thriller in the style of the Coens' brutal older films *Blood Simple* and *Miller's Crossing*. *No Country* is a mean-fisted tangle of money, wits and working men, with Bardem as the fearsomely hair-styled force of nature killer and Brolin as the man who finds a deadly haul of drugs dollars. Beautifully made, with a heart of hard ice.





▼ You can steal any vehicle in the game after a brief button-matching struggle with its owner.

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW**
PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

Hired gun

Mercenaries 2 World In Flames

Would you look at the bombs on that

Any game that fills your pockets with enough firepower to shoot the moon out of orbit and then waves you outside to play has to be fun. Explosions are God's way of releasing happiness as quickly possible. Bunker busters, artillery strikes, RPGs, *nuclear bombs*? Oh go then, I'll take the lot...

But while blowing everything into little chunks, and then shooting the little chunks, is fun – there's no ignoring Merc 2's tatty edges and old fashioned feel. It's as if Pandemic has missed the gear change between the last generation and



Info

Format PS3 **ETA**
5 Sep **Pub** EA
Dev Pandemic
Players 1-2 **Web**
pandemicstudios.
com/mercenaries
It's like The original
PS2 game with a bit
of an HD touch up.

this one. Chunky, poorly textured environments, unpredictable 40 watt AI, repetitive missions and occasional glitches all threaten to sour the experience. Mercs 2 isn't ruinously broken, but if you could give it a shake you'd definitely hear a rattle.

Army of one

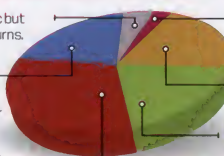
The premise has you loose in Venezuela, hunting a double-crossing former employee called Solano. Unfortunately he's the country's President, so reaching him means working for a variety of factions to gather enough intel and equipment to go after him. There's Universal Petroleum, a big American corporation that's sucking the countries' natural resources dry; The People's Liberation Army Of Venezuela (PLAV), a group of Che Guevara-style rebels; ►

What you do in... Mercs 2

5% Loving the unrealistic but great slidey handbrake turns.

20% Deciding the fuel air RPG is the greatest weapon ever created.

33% Rifling through your bomb catalogue before choosing 'the big one'.



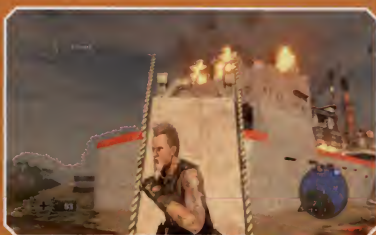
3% Wishing you could solve all of life's problems with a laser designator.

18% Scanning the radar for helicopters to hijack with the grapple gun.

31% Realising it's not a good idea to call in a cruise missile strike three feet to your left.

► There are three mercs available. The difference is cosmetic though, and has no impact on gameplay.





And some questionably caricatured Jamaican pirates ("Air-ting awl ree, mon", *really?*). There are others, but they're spoilers.

Generally you roam around like a small angry war looking for somewhere to happen, picking up missions that take your fancy. There is loads to do, but like Just Cause – which this feels almost

identical to – the variety is thin. The only jobs outside of the story objectives are high visibility targets (HVTs), to kill or capture (alive gets you more dollar) and faction buildings to destroy (which is a good way of getting in a group's good books). Even the main story is padded out with filler missions. There are a lot of races – fun but pointless – and 'outpost

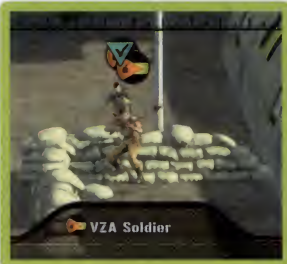
▲ Rolling into an enemy base with a tank makes you a trundly tin can of god-like wrath.

missions', which involve capturing enemy bases.

Allies or enemies change constantly depending on the jobs you take and who you attack. Everyone hates someone so it's impossible to take a mission without making enemies. It should be an interesting balancing act as you play sides against each other but it's rendered a moot point for two reasons. Firstly, it's messy. There's always *someone* shooting at you so you rarely feel the benefit of making friends. You might get a few UP troops manning the guns as you smash up a PLAV base in an APC but you never feel like they're fighting with

Split-Screen Two ways to earn your oil dollars

START



Find your man

Each faction has certain high visibility targets. They'll pay a big cash bounty if you can capture or kill them. Here's two ways to collect...



Steal a faction vehicle and attach some C4 to the front.



Taking the target alive means you must fight to reach him.



The vehicle acts as a disguise – speed into the base, then jump.



Get up close so you can knock him out and tie him up.



Detonate the bomb to kill the target – it's easy, but pay is halved.



Call for evac and airlift your living, and more lucrative, target away.

FINISH



Payday

With the target either verified dead or captured, you get paid. The faction you attacked won't be happy, mind. Still you can always bribe it better.



Car bombing

Disguise yourself in an enemy vehicle and you can load it up with remote-detonated C4 and drive it to their front door.



Stealing a ride

The game's new grapple hook enables you to steal helicopters as they fly overhead.



Friendly fire

Drop in/out co-op means you and a mate can cause twice as much trouble online.

LOVING

HATING

⊗ to steal

You've got to complete a button-matching mini-game every time you hijack a vehicle. What, again?



The headless chicken AI

It's only a small wall. Can you not go around it? No? You're just going to run on the spot instead, then.



you, more sort of 'around' you. Secondly, you can bribe angry factions to make peace. So there's no point trying to appease groups because you can just smooth things over with a big friendly pile of cash. The AI is idiot-simple, too. Try to drop a bomb secretly from a safe distance and you're instantly discovered, while 'trespass zones' mean you're attacked the second you cross them. You might get the odd chance to snipe unseen but after all Pandemic's talk of "How will you play?" – which suggested varied strategic approaches – problem solving always boils down to blowing the absolute crap out of everything.

Cheap thrills

The action is undeniably enjoyable, but it's so samey. Storm a base, shoot some soldiers and dial up a big fat bomb. There are some cool set-pieces, like destroying a massive oil rig or flattening a castle, but the structure barely changes. In Mercs 2's favour the core run and gun stuff is fast and arcadey – keep moving, keep shooting – and there's always 'just one more' soldier to kill. It's especially fun in drop in and out co-op where stealing choppers, rigging bombs and raising hell is brilliant fun with a mate.

The game's big sell, the destruction, does feel low rent, though. It works – you can destroy *anything* – but it's



▲ The ability to steal choppers with the grapple gun means plenty of air combat.

Castlist

The drunk



Micha

A boozy jet pilot who flies in your air strikes. Usually plastered and incoherent.

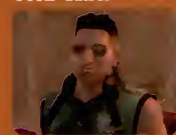
The sexy mechanic



Eva

Spends most of her time elbows deep in an engine. Gives you your grapple gun.

The taxi



Ewan

Irish chopper pilot who'll take you anywhere and pick up any gear you find.

The brains



Fiona

Finds you work, contacts, and updates all your objectives in the field.



"Keep shooting – there's always 'just one more' soldier to kill."

chunky and simplistic. Especially compared to Bad Company or even Stranglehold. Buildings slide sheepishly into the floor behind smoke screens and trees pop like balloons, fragments disappearing instantly. Nothing feels solid. It's as if the game's been told, in great detail, how things break but never actually seen it happen.

An interesting idea is the ability to pick up any money, weapons and fuel you find in the field. Fuel is vital for flying – transport and air strikes, say, so you need to keep your tanks full. While collecting weapons simply saves you a few bob. It doesn't add much though, because there's literally tons of stuff lying

around, so running low on supplies never really becomes an issue.

You're hired

If I had to sum up Mercs 2 by the end of this sentence I'd say 'It's alright'. It's not brilliant, and it's not terrible. Instead, it hovers in a murky region between the two. Let's call it Averagstakia. It's definitely entertaining, but everything merges into one long blur of explosions, mayhem and carnage, so that nothing stands out overall.

The repetitive action is appealing enough to keep you playing, but you can't shake the feeling that this is a PS3 game fighting a PS2 war.

Leon Hurley





Collecting pollen helps new flowers and vines to grow so your garden turns into one giant organic climbing frame.



All the gardens vary in design and colour scheme. We call this one 'The Day The Lawnmower Bit Daddy'.

Flower fiddler

Pixeljunk Eden

Is this PSN plant-'em-up paradise to play?

A garden is a place you go to relax. Florally-themed PSN platformer Eden might be original, quirky and eventually brilliant, but unless you find failure and confusion soothing you might be better off sticking with actual pansies and a Japanese water feature.

You control a grimp – a little creature that looks like a sprouting potato and moves like a spider, and navigates Eden's swaying gardens of plants, vines and rocks by jumping and swinging. Every jump you make leaves behind a trail of silk thread, which you can snap to jump higher or use to swing in big circles to kill enemies and harvest their pollen. The pollen then lets you grow new plants which you can climb to reach new areas. It's a completely original way of moving around, which is exciting, but there's no tutorial level, which is madness.

You clear a level, or garden, by collecting glowing objects called spectra, but after an hour of bouncing in the wrong direction, misjudging jumps and plummeting to the ground you'll be lucky if you've even glimpsed one. To add to the pressure there's a time limit. You can top it up by collecting crystals dotted around the level, but in the early stages when you're still learning the ropes they feel few and far between. It's almost as if the game is determined to make you give up.

Blooming lovely

Persist and decipher the baffling controls, though, and Eden starts to grow on you like some sort of exotic mould. Suddenly you can scoop up hundreds of bits of pollen in a few swings and climb higher and higher through the Technicolor levels. The gardens react to your actions, not in a Lumines, graphic designer-gone-mental sort of way, but with subtle colour changes and unfurling vines. It never quite reaches Flow's level of dreamy



Master the controls and then you can upload videos of your aerial acrobatics to Youtube.

calm, but it comes pretty close.

There's a whole load of swanky features on offer too. You can make videos and upload them to Youtube, use remote play and rack up Trophies – but the real find is the multiplayer. Up to three people can play at once, working together to find spectra and sucking up pollen like overexcited bumblebees. It's a jam-packed package. Eden might be an acquired taste, but with its one-of-a-kind controls, creative art style and cracking multiplayer, it's definitely worth the hard work... and the £4.99 asking price. **Rachel Weber**



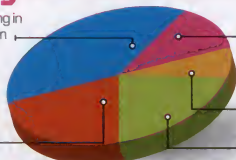
Info

Format PSN **ETA** Out now **Pub** Sony **Dev** Q Games **Players** 1-3 **Web** pixeljunk.jp **It's like** Flow, redesigned by Alan Titchmarsh during a breakdown.

What you do in... Eden

37% Smugly swinging in giant lazy circles, then overshooting your target by a foot.

23% Desperately searching for one last crystal to fend off old father time.



13% Plummeting to the ground as the air around you fills with the bad words.

7% Thinking the plant you're standing on looks a bit, you know, rude.

20% Praying to Jesus that you can make that jump.

PlayStation

Official Magazine - UK

7



Missed birdie

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09

A workmanlike round from the big cat

You know how Call Of Duty 4's brilliance has ruined us for other shooters? Well, turns out Everybody's Golf: World Tour has had the same effect on its genre. Because although the new Woods is as solid as ever, for sheer fun it's comprehensively outplayed by its bug-eyed cartoon rival.

For the most part, this is classic Woods. Both old-skool (power gauge) and new-fangled (right stick) control schemes work fine, but the latter affords you finer input over power and direction, so it's a more satisfying method of nailing a zinging drive, or chipped approach shot.

Hard hitter

Even so, it lacks the pick-up-and-play factor that makes Everybody's Golf so essential. This is a tough sim that punishes mistakes, even on lower difficulty levels, and some will find that off-putting. At the same time dedicated players will jump at the chance to hone their skills over extended play. Putting the hours in and fine-tuning your game while learning each course is genuinely rewarding, but there's not enough here to keep you playing alone.

EA has put all its eggs in the online basket, enabling you to upload your

Listen really carefully and you can hear Tiger's gammy knee clicking as he swings.

Info
Format PS3 **ETA** Out now **Price** £0.79
Pub EA **Dev** EA Tiburon
Players 1-4 **Web** easports.com/tigerwoods09 **It's like** Taking to the green and actually appearing vaguely competent.



Replays look lovely, but being unable to save them to your hard drive is a big miss.

best shots and create challenges around them, as well as compete in simultaneous four-way matches. But in enhancing net features, it's forgotten those who want to swing solo. For instance, you can only play the PGA Tour by creating a new golfer and working your way up the ladder – there's no option to select Tiger, or Colin Montgomerie, or Vijay Singh and just jump into a season. It's like buying FIFA then discovering that you can only play the

Premiership by getting there with Workshop Town. And it's a major factor in Tiger slipping off top spot on the PS3 leaderboard. **Ben Wilson**



PlayList

Essential tunes to download this month

David Holmes Holy Pictures

Format Track **ETA** Out now **Price** £0.79

Back after a stint in Hollywood composing scores for the likes of Ocean's Thirteen, Holmes returns with a record to remind us he used to knock around with Primal Scream. Both personal and loaded with euphoria, this is passionate rocking indeed. myspace.com/davidholmesofficial



The Automatic
Steve McQueen
Format Album **ETA** Out now **Price** £0.79
 "I was the teenage Steve McQueen!" shout The Automatic, on this nitro-powered cut from their second album This Is A Fix. Apparently it's a metaphor for escaping from their sleepy home town of Cowbridge in Wales, although it seems unlikely that they did so by jumping over Nazi barbed wire on a Triumph. myspace.com/theautomatic



Nas Untitled

Format Album **ETA** Out now **Price** £7.99

Nas might have been forced into dropping the edgy title of his new album to appease Mr Walmart, but elsewhere, hip-hop's poet laureate isn't pulling any punches. Untitled is steeped in the anger of the projects, Nas unleashing fire in all directions, but his fury is seemingly steeped in a cautious optimism: see pro-Barack Obama number Black President. myspace.com/nas

Download of the month
Slipknot
All Hope Is Gone
Format Album **ETA** Out now **Price** £7.99
 Rock's most mental nonet (that's nine) blend the dark thrash of 2001's Iowa with 2004's more experimental Vol 3. Anthems like Psychosocial suggest there's much to recommend, even if you've outgrown the appeal of a man dressed as a scary clown. myspace.com/slipknot1



With its keen eye for detail, EA has made Madden great again – on the field, at least.

PS3
096 Superbowl contender

Madden NFL 09

Hall Of Famer returns to form

Info

Format PS3 **ETA**
Out now **Pub** EA **Dev**
EA Tiburon **Players**
1-4 **Web** easports.
com/madden09 **It's**
like Playing American
football for a living, but
not earning \$2m a year
for the privilege.

Well, this is a turn up. After three years of underwhelming next-gen Maddens – two of them truly awful – we'd all but given up on EA's silver-haired, bourbon-voiced, good ol' boy and his once all-conquering gridiron series. Turns out we wrote John off too early, because at the fourth try EA has finally got it right. No more relying on superior PS2 versions for your US footy fix: PS3 Madden is great at last.

There's a simple reason behind this turnaround: EA has realised – for the long haul, we hope – that sports gamers don't want a new gimmick every year. All

we're looking for is a game that's realistic yet fun – with updated rosters and a few visual upgrades, *obviously* – and that's exactly what Madden NFL 09 delivers. It's still overloaded with extras – being able to play a perfect port of Mega Drive's Madden '93 is fun for all of 12 minutes, and the trailer for NFL Head Coach 09 makes me excited in a way you're

camera from FIFA's Be A Pro mode. Beat the last defender and as you sprint towards the end zone the camera zooms in right behind your player, shaking to denote the excitement of the moment. Crucially, the running game is just as much fun. Looking for gaps in the defensive line and following your blockers requires patience and nerve,

“You're awarded a 'Madden IQ' which readjusts after each game.”

probably best not knowing about – but ultimately, it all comes down to gameplay. And that's where 09 is so strong.

Whether you're just looking to pick up a pad and sling some deep passes or you want to control every hot route, fake hike and linebacker shift, this constantly pleases. Pinging passes around remains a highlight, especially now that the series has adopted the 'through-on-goal'

while timing lineman-evading moves with the right stick is a true test of skill.

The constantly adjusting AI plays a major factor in keeping things interesting. When you first load the disc, a holographic 'Madden Test' rates your play in four areas: passing, rushing, and defending against both. You're then awarded a 'Madden IQ', which readjusts after each game depending on your

What you do in... Madden 09



Timeline Madden series highlights

1988



John Madden Football Apple II

Where the dynasty started for the coach-turned-analyst who led the Raiders to Super Bowl victory in 1976.

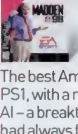
1993



Madden NFL '94 Mega Drive/SNES

Debuted season mode and the NFL license. Also the first EA release to feature the 'It's in the game' tagline.

1997



Madden NFL 98 PS1

The best American football game on PS1, with a new emphasis on defensive AI – a breakthrough for a series that had always focused on offensive play.

2002



Madden NFL 2003 PS2

Still seen by some as the series' peak, with moreish gameplay, stacks of realism, and TV-style presentation.

2006



Madden NFL 07 PS3

A horrifying PS3 debut, with all-over-the-shop AI and countless bugs. So bad it was never released in the UK.



▲ Rivalry games have an added edge, with some players getting a ratings boost (or drop).



▲ The EA Backtrack feature analyses your mistakes and helps you improve. Seriously.

performance. It's the closest thing Madden has to a gimmick, but after three weeks with the game it seems to be working – if I select teams with roughly equal ratings then the CPU pushes me all the way, which is how it should be.

Less is more

The AI improvements don't just stop at the Madden IQ test. Last year's game was wrecked by hyper-intelligent defensive backs who would nab interceptions even when you arrowed the ball directly into your receiver's hands. As a result, the effect of certain attributes like speed has been reduced slightly, and it's made a huge difference. There's still an obvious advantage to having a wide receiver with velcro hands or a defensive end who's super swift off the line, but mercifully superstars no longer feel like cheat characters.

As a result you can win with lesser teams by thinking tactically and looking for a chink in your opponent's armour. Packers pushing their cornerbacks up to the line again? Try some long passes downfield to your fastest receiver. Giants keep pressuring your QB with their shifty D-line? Throw in some slant routes and release the ball faster. American football mixes brain and brawn like no other sport, and it's something Madden 09 reflects beautifully.



▲ In a great touch, you can watch every single play again at the end of any match.

As well as doing a fine line in on-the-money gameplay, Madden is a pleasure to look at. The stadia, weather, and lighting effects are all beautifully realised and really bring matches to life, and the players look a thousand times better without the waxy sheen that used to be an EA trademark. Receiving the kick-off under lights in the driving snow of Green Bay's Lambeau Field is one of my standout moments on PS3.

So it's a genuine shame that the other presentation aspects here don't match those quality visuals. Although you can see them bounding around, crowds make next to no noise, and while new play-by-play men Tom Hammond and Cris Collinsworth offer some insightful quips

▲ The larger-than-life visuals of previous years have gone, adding to the organic, authentic feel.



▲ The holographic Madden Test looks kooky, but it's one of EA's most innovative creations in years.

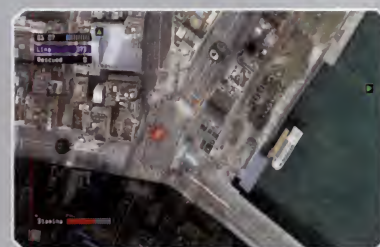
(particularly in the new EA Backtrack replay feature) they're completely devoid of charisma. This malaise even extends to Franchise – traditionally Madden's standout mode. You plod along, playing games, trading players and signing draft picks, but it's all been-here-before stuff – you could just as easily be playing Madden NFL 98 on PS1.

Still, it's testament to how good the gameplay is that you'll keep playing anyway despite these vanilla off-field options. Because come wind, rain or snow, once you get out on the pitch this is a thumping NFL game that constantly enthralls and delights. The old Madden you know and love is back, and surely here to stay. **Ben Wilson**



ScorePole
Madden's the king of PS3 gridiron, but MLB remains the US sports class leader.





▲ There was a news story about a guy whose dog appeared in his garden on Google Earth. That's not a dog, though, it's a big red monster. Careful.



▲ If your trailing line of panicked idiots anger you, you can lead them away from the Escape Zone and to their deaths. "More Kool Aid, gang?"

Zombie botherer

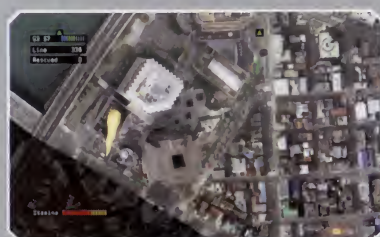
The Last Guy Japan Premium



Or, as we're calling it, Google Apocalypse

Hiroyuki Goto is a very clever Japanese man who until recently held the world record for reciting pi from memory (he got to 42,195 decimal places before presumably realising it was a giant waste of time). He also devised the brilliant Mojipittan word puzzle game, which you can play on virtually every electronic device in Japan, including PSP. The Last Guy is Goto-san's surprise new project and, with its escape-the-zombies! setup, is a surprisingly lowbrow diversion.

Here's how it works. The Earth has been hit by a big purple ray, turning everybody caught out in the open into zombies and monsters. You're the last guy (obviously), a member of the United Rescue Force commissioned to run around real-world locations, trademark



▲ London and San Francisco have been mentioned as upcoming Last Guy maps.

Like this?
Play these



Resident Evil 4
The pinnacle of zombie-capping on PlayStation to date (yes, even if they're not real zombies – which they kind of are anyway).

VERDICT 10



Exit 2
Played from a side-on perspective rather than an overhead one, Exit 2 carries the same kind of escape incentives as The Last Guy.

VERDICT 7

red cape flapping in the breeze, to free trapped civilians from the buildings they're hiding in. It's the little people who matter here – in fact, they're tiny, moving in panicked swarms through the satellite image maps as you encourage them to flee from danger. You need to ferry them outside and guide them along zombie-and-monster-plagued streets until they can reach designated Escape Zones, where they then chat among themselves and wait for a rescue helicopter to pick them up.

Little Tokyo

Each mission requires that you save between 700 and 1,500 citizens within a time limit of five, six or seven minutes. You can sprint and they'll follow, but only while your stamina bar remains charged; once that's gone, you be slower until the bar refills. Hold **ⓧ** and the map switches to a neon-on-black heat sensor view. This makes it easier to see where people are grouped inside buildings, but also makes the enemies roaming the streets invisible, and therefore liable to sneak up on you and your



Info

Format PSN download **ETA** Japan Import **Pub** Sony **Dev** Sony Japan Studio **Players** 1 **Web** lastguy.jp **It's like** Being a Bond villain watching the end of the world on satellite camera.

temporarily-rescued sheep people. And, increasing the pressure by another notch, it's instant Game Over if The Last Guy accidentally walks into a baddie. Think of it like a mutant Pac-Man played out in Google Earth.

This first Japan-only version of The Last Guy contains just three levels, all set in Tokyo, which will only keep you going for two or three hours at best – and that's if you hammer the high scores and dig out all the VIPs hidden in each area. More maps are promised as the game is rolled out in local PSN Stores across the world, though why they're not included from the off is a mystery. On the plus side though,

are some tight controls, and what is here, is lovely and detailed – you can even see the weird horn-like roof monument of Tokyo's Asahi Beer HQ. But this will only be essential once it expands to full size. **Nathan Ditum**



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❑ Playing bass is a thankless task, even when you're pretty.



Aging rocker

Rock Band

Finally touring Europe, but do the fans care?

It's sort of ironic that Gimme Shelter is Rock Band's best song, because Rock Band itself is the Rolling Stones of rhythm-action gaming. The undisputed king of the genre when it came out in America nearly a year ago (at which time we reviewed it on import and scored it 9/10 in issue 14), it's still capable of putting on a good performance, but it's looking increasingly creaky, overpriced and obsolete (and in both cases we're amazed that the lead guitar's survived as long as it has).

For those who don't know the score, Rock Band is basically Guitar Hero plus SingStar plus a set of drums and some minor improvements on those two big name games. In some ways it's better than its forerunners – the ability to keep your Overdrive (the equivalent of Guitar Hero's Star Power) topped up while it's activated is handy, the fills at the end of certain songs are fun, the mic's ability to pick up individual words is impressive and letting out a wail to 'save' fellow band members from failure is a crazy kind of genius. Yet in some ways it's worse: the on-screen display is less easy to

Set List



RADIOHEAD

"You're so f***ing special." Beautiful, just beautiful.

★★★★★



THE KILLERS

"When yo-ooo were yu-uuuu-ung". Great vocal, killer riff.

★★★★★



METALLICA

"All is said and done, never is the sun." Brilliant. Scary, too.

★★★★★

comprehend, the world tour system is overly complicated and the fact that drums are so limited in when they can activate Overdrive is, frankly, a bit stupid. Other things – like the plastic guitar's lack of 'click', its big rectangular fret buttons and its convex strum bar – are just a matter of taste. But these are all things that we've praised and/or criticised before, and which haven't changed.

Rocks off

What's more important now is the stuff that's happened *since* our first review of Rock Band. On the positive side, EA has made good on its promise to provide massive amounts of downloadable content, with over 180 extra songs available for the US version of the game (the list grows by the week – check out snipurl.com/3cxjj for the comprehensive rundown). A similarly huge catalogue of DLC is planned for Europe, including the entire classic Pixies album Doolittle. Though the guitar sections aren't quite as demanding as Guitar Hero's, playing the drums on Hard has become an addiction for us, to the point where, on a good day,



❑ Although padded, the drums are still loud. Still, it's not like next door don't hate you already.



Info

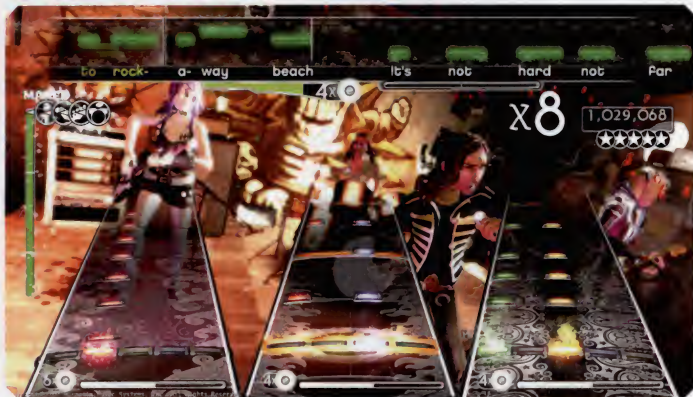
Format PS3 ETA 5 Sep Pub EA
Dev Harmonix Players 1-4 Web
rockbandgame.com It's like
Forming your own student band,
except that people might actually
want to watch you play.

most members of OPM could probably step in for Charlie Watts. On the negative side, there's been a lot of trouble with the controllers – our guitar broke within days of getting it, our drum pedal snapped a couple of months later, and although EA has been offering a hassle-free exchange policy, it's still annoying.

Even more importantly, thanks to production 'difficulties' delaying the UK launch, there are loads of young up-comers making Rock Band look old and out of touch. Due out in America *this month* is Rock Band 2, which fixes some of this version's problems – blending solo and group world tours into one option, for instance – and offers almost exactly the same tracklist via backwards compatibility. (For more on that game flick to page 53.) Looking slightly further ahead, Guitar Hero World Tour has a



▲ With over 180 DLC songs, you'll keep the crowd happy.



▲ With you on the mic and mates playing bass, drums, and gee-tar, this is *almost* perfect...



▲ ...if you can forget the 180-sheet hole in your wallet. All together now: "Arrrrrrgh!"

superior drum kit and custom song-making options (spin to page 16 for the full details on this could-be-revolutionary feature), effectively trumping everything Rock Band does best.

Rip this joint

And, finally, it's difficult to look past the now infamous pricing. In case you've spent the last few months in a Thai rehab clinic, the RRP for the whole game-mic-drums-guitar package is a gargantuan £178.98. (And... relax.) The dollar

might be weak, but stumping up double the amount US customers are handing over for a game that, let's not forget, is *ten months* old is a bit of a wrench. This stuff's relative, obviously – you could easily drop £160 on a pair of tickets for the real Rolling Stones, and then you'd only be getting two hours of head-bobbing in comparison to an almost limitless amount of fun – but it'd be much easier to recommend Rock Band if it came in at under a ton.

As it is, all our original glowing praise still applies: it's an innovative and brilliant game, almost essential if you regularly have friends over, and always fun. Viewed on its own, it's difficult to fault – but when you start to consider the competition, it's a less attractive proposition.

Like the Stones, it's not what it used to be. Still, on the plus side, it's unlikely to take drugs in your kitchen or sleep with your girlfriend. **Joel Snape**



Straight to bargain bin

With **Nathan Ditum**



Jesus, it's been quite a month. "Which gender would you like to be?" asks the kind lady voice at the start of **Soul Nomad & The World Eaters**. How long have you got, love? I'm sick of Japanese RPGs with sexy boxart promising a world of epic romance and adventure, but actually offering squat pixelated 2D sprites and endless dialogue boxes. Which is probably why within seconds of answering the lady's question (I went 'male' – maybe there's something I'm just not ready to admit, even to myself), I zoned out of the game entirely and started imagining her talking to me from some localisation studio somewhere on the outskirts of LA. I wonder if she's pretty? She sounds pretty.

If I had to tell **TT Superbikes Real Road Racing Championship** to its face why I hated it I'd probably say something like, "It's not you, it's me."

You're a perfectly good if strict motorcycle simulator, and I'm just a clatter-thumbed idiot who doesn't really understand about engines or gears or anything." And I'd be lying (except about the engines) because even though I'm crap at driving games I still understand that two key selling points of the genre are 1) going really fast, and 2) not falling off every second corner, and TT only allows you to do one of these at a time. I mean, this is basic, like having a gun that doesn't shoot backwards or a sword not made of a bendy flower stalk. Next!



Hey, **Legend Of Sayuki**, the early '90s called – it wants its graphics back. And its 16-bit sound. And, well, pretty much everything else you've crudely pilfered from yesteryear. Seriously, take away the water goddess Sayuki and her snowball-with-leaf-ears sidekick, and I'm pretty sure I remember playing this on my Mega Drive (though I was pretty jacked up on Dime bars and wearing Bermuda shorts at the time, so there's a chance I'm mistaken). Apart from the fact that it's pretty like the wrong end of a dog, my main problem with the game is conceptual. As scrolling adventures go it's light and playable, but if I'm the goddess of water – and the fact I fire shards of ice at enemies supports the notion that maybe, just maybe, *I am* – then why can't I control the snowman heavies constantly getting in my angelic little face?

Abomination of the month

"1000's of puzzles!" the box for **Puzzler Collection** screams, which is wrong for two reasons. Firstly: sorry to come over all Herr Grammar, but that apostrophe is wrong, and if there's anything that screams 'amateur bag of balls' louder than a textual error on the front of a word puzzle game I have no idea what it might be. Secondly, there aren't thousands of puzzles, there are *four*, and I'm not even really sure one of them – fitword – is real. So that leaves crosswords, word search and the faddish sudoku (seriously, people, how do puzzles become fashionable?), and they all play exactly like they do on actual paper, with the pointless aid of a sophisticated and expensive piece of electronics equipment.





▲ He's got blue shorts, a cool blue beard and is therefore called Ice. It's inspirational stuff, no?



▲ The focus on blocking and parrying quickly sucks all the fun out of Facebreaker.



Unhappy slapping

Facebreaker

Funny like being punched repeatedly in the mouth



Amazing fact: when you actually make something funny and good, cultural stereotyping is slightly easier to tolerate. Take the third Austin Powers film: you were probably too busy laughing at Mini-Me's tiny face – it's tiny! – to notice that half of the jokes were about how Dutch people like to paint their genitals gold. If you accidentally catch a bit of 'Allo 'Allo on a Sunday afternoon though, nothing happens that's nearly funny enough to distract you from the fact that the show's basically a hate crime against the entire French nation. What's that got to do with Facebreaker? Well, when we tell you that the character list includes a simpering Italian called Romeo, a giant stupid Russian called Molotov, and a big fat black man in skeleton face paint called Voodoo, you can probably appreciate that the game would have to be pretty damn good to overcome our pathetic liberal reservations about liking things that are, well, a bit culturally 'narrow'.

Like this?
Play these

Fight Night Round 3
Flawed heavyweight, but still the best banger on PS3.
VERDICT 7

Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2
Shallow but likeable round of larger than life cartoon fisticuffs.
VERDICT 6

But Facebreaker isn't good. And here's why. You have four attacks – high punch, low punch, haymaker and (weirdly, for a boxing game) throw. If you want to throw a hook at your opponent, you need to block a punch first, by holding down the same button as the attack that's coming in at you. You can also parry – which does more damage but is trickier to time – and you can chain haymakers in with normal attacks to perform 'Breaker' combos. And that's your lot.

Punch drunk

Seriously. You can't throw hooks without blocking first. You can't choose not to throw a hook after blocking, or even decide to throw a low punch after a high block. If you block and hook, the other boxer knows whether you're going high or low, so he can just parry your attack and get a free hit. The game's designed to be frenetic, pad-hammering fun, but as soon as anyone learns any basic strategy, matches suddenly turn into drawn-out blocking sessions, unless one player's picked a character with an unavoidable throw – and yes, they do exist. Every single game turns into a button-hammering



Info

Format PS3 ETA 5 Sep Pub EA Dev EA Players 1-2 Web easports.com/facebreaker **It's like** Getting dragged into a fight by your least hilarious mate.

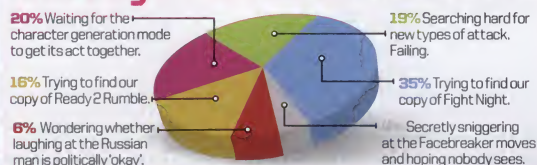
marathon with minuscule amounts of thought involved, like a playground fight where both kids are just trying to land one big punch. And even the much-touted facial breaking doesn't make up for it – the impacts aren't as brutal as Fight Night's, the attacks aren't as over the top as Ready 2 Rumble's, and the comedy touches – fights carry on after the bell, fighters sway woozily between rounds – wear a bit thin because you see them *every single time*.

What it all adds up to is a shallow package that you might buy as a PSN download: there's fun here, but only the sort of amount you'd pay two pints' worth of money for. Maybe if it had been released that way we'd have taken a

more generous attitude towards

Facebreaker's many flaws, but at full price, it's just not clever, funny, or exciting enough to justify a purchase. That said, it's still better than the complete 'Allo 'Allo boxset. **Joel Snape**

What you do in... Facebreaker



International Athletics

Format PSP ETA Out now Pub Ghostlight



Just what you need while PSPing in a public place: A game where you smash the L and R buttons in such a way that you look like you're trying to subdue a particularly angry crab. Despite the evident RSI threat, this is fun – particularly if you grew up playing International Track & Field and are looking to rekindle your love. Not all the 14 events are senseless button-bashers, either. Hammer throw and discus are about rhythm and timing, and the running target rifle event is a fine



test of reaction and accuracy. Loading times annoy and the difficulty is erratic – I smashed the 110m hurdles world record in my first try on Advanced – but even so, this is way superior to rival Beijing 2008. **Ben Wilson**



NBA Live 09

Format PS3 ETA 7 Oct Pub EA Sports



Every year NBA Live seems to overpromise and underdeliver. The 09 model is no different, despite the fact it packs a potentially great new feature in Dynamic DNA: a daily stats download which reflects player improvements and team results in the real-life NBA season.

With the DNA system not yet active I've been unable to test it out (more next month), but the chances are it won't offset Live's bigger problems. On court, it's simply slower and less responsive than rival NBA 2K – a problem made even more acute due to the



unnecessarily fiddly controls. Visually, it's nothing special either, with the cardboard cut-out crowds looking particularly wretched this year. Measured against the rest of EA's high quality pro sports line-up, NBA 09 looks and plays a distinctly amateur game of B-ball. **Ben Wilson**



Buzz! Quiz Master

Format PSP ETA Out now Pub Sony



Sony's quiz series has always been one to play with mates, wowing them (or, more likely, making them furious) with your spectacularly pointless/comprehensive knowledge of Beyonce, Biblical plagues, and the capital of Burma. And handheld Buzz! makes a reasonable effort at multiplayer, with Quiz Host (you read out the questions), PSP passing and game sharing for up to four players. None of them can match up to the pace and tearful recriminations you get with four



pads and a TV though – they're just too slow. Lone quizzers get new picture-based rounds and trophies to keep things fresh, but you'll still finish the whole thing in a couple of hours. Recommended for the popular and TV-less. Oh, and it's Naypidaw. **Rachel Weber**



Japan Watch

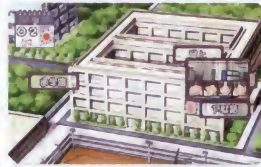
This month's overseas action in a nutshell



HimeHibi Princess Days Portable

Format PSP Pub Takuyo Subtitles No

When Aizaki Koi's grandfather – one of the board of directors at an elitist boys college – kidnaps her and forces her to attend his school in an attempt to prove that co-ed education is the future, the potential for teenage romance and hilarious misunderstandings is high. And by 'romance' I mean 'pregnancy'.



Infinite Loop Kojjou Ga Miseta Yume

Format PSP Pub Nippon Ichi Subtitles No

From the minds of the you-really-should-play-it Disgaea series comes this adventure in which a plague kills most of the inhabitants of a medieval castle. Now a spirit, you're free to possess the living in an attempt to discover who's been dunking rats in the well like Bubonic digestives.



DJ Max Portable 2

Format PSP Pub Pentavision Subtitles No

Disco fever shows no sign of abating with the release of this wheels-of-steel Beatmania rip-off. In all seriousness though, who actually wants to play a game just to be able to finish listening to a piece of generic Belgian house music? The sooner PSP gets a second stick and we can all just start playing first-person shooters, the better.



Exotic Boxart Of The Month



Drastic Killer
A clever piece of design forcing you to confront your own murderous impulses. Now, which smug, over-styled fop deserves to get a lead pipe wrapped around their face first?



Double Clutch
The baffling title! The two heroes strolling into hell! Cool, huh? That all kind of depends on whether you enjoyed Conflict: Denied Ops the first time around in English...



Panic Palette Portable
Stare at the box art for 30 seconds. Now imagine that flush of panic as you realise you've left it out on the coffee table and dad's at the door.

Goalies are very flexible despite looking they've been pounding the pizza buffet.



Slapshot stunner

NHL 09

Near flawless show from EA's ice-cold superstar

For a sport which basically consists of crook-nosed Canadian lugs battering each other toothless in a hard-floored arena of pain, NHL is *really* pretty. Like, the prettiest sports game on PS3 pretty (import love MLB 08 doesn't count – she's like our overseas girlfriend, so strictly speaking this isn't cheating).

Caring about how everything looks isn't shallow – sports games, maybe more than any other, rely on presentation to give you a real taste of the experience. NHL transports you into the rink with dozens of thoughtful throwaway touches. Players react to in-game events like actual players do, looking to the heavens in disbelief when they're scored against, raising their hands to their face in pain when they're high-sticked, and flinging

Dev talk



"We can't do custom soundtracks on PS3 just yet. MLB The Show does it? Customised? Alright, maybe we should give those guys a call..."

David Littman
Producer, EA Sports

For the first time you can lift your opponent's stick to disrupt their game.

themselves into bundled embraces when they nab a goal. The ice itself is criss-crossed with a thousand tiny skate-scratches. The crowd is a cheering, leering, fully-modelled 3D monster. And – just a tiny thing, but a perfect example of how well-conceived the game is – sometimes during a break in play for an offside or goalie cover up, a replay of an earlier, unrelated piece of play is shown again, just like in real sports coverage.

Tip of the 'berg

Best of all, the game behind this graphics is brilliant. There's a ton of depth here – line changes and create-a-play customisations are just the start – but the main thing is that it plays fast and fluid. If you've never played an ice hockey game, the movement and speed of the players is totally different to any other sport thanks to the skating. You can't just stop and turn, you have to conserve speed, glide and arc, and NHL 09 – like the series has for ages – makes you *feel* like you're skating.

The controls are intuitive in the sense that the motion of the right analogue stick matches that of your player's hockey stick (the left is for moving). But when you're in the



Be as cynical as you like, but there's a definite thrill to seeing your name on the back of a shirt.



Challenging for face-offs using the analogue stick feels more logical than just hitting a button.

Info

Format PS3 ETA 26 Sep Pub
EA Dev EA Players 1-10
Web easports.com/nhl09
It's like The brilliant NHL 08, but with tons of upgrades and a killer Be A Pro mode.

mix of a goal-mouth scramble, making a considered motion with your thumb rather than just jabbing a button can feel too complicated. The design's obviously been carefully planned – the other major controls, poke-check and pass, have been moved to **RT** and **LT** so your thumb doesn't have to switch between stick and face buttons – but it takes a lot of getting used to. But then again, the game also offers custom setups or the NHL '94 controls (shedding the deking and shot accuracy), so it's hard to criticise.

The other reason it's hard to criticise is that the controls work brilliantly in Be A Pro, the career mode carted over from last year's FIFA. They just make more sense when you only have to worry about controlling your player and not setting up whole plays yourself. In fact, the Be A Pro mode is easily the most compelling thing here – with six players per side instead of 11 it feels like you're having more influence, and I can't wait to try the five-on-five (no goalies) online mode once the game goes on sale.

So, it's another big score for EA's long-standing top sports title, and a must-have for everyone, be they diehard hockey fans or Bambi-legged noobs. **Nathan Ditum**





Wet tracks help the stubborn steering by making you fall off more.

Cheesy rider

SBK-08 Superbike World Championship

Does this go one louder than SBK-07?

SBK-08 is both realistic and unrealistic at the same time, and it's a queasy feeling. As you'd expect it has all the principle teams, riders and bikes of the real series, plus this year's line up of tracks. Unfortunately though, calling this line-up 'the whole lot' is almost exactly not quite right.

It's close enough to trick someone who doesn't actually know quite what a Yamaha R1, or Noriyuki Haga, or Brands Hatch actually looks like. But surely this game is going to appeal more to people who follow the series and do know. And care? Casual players would probably enjoy something a little more freeform and fantastical anyway.

Motor mechanics

SBK-08 certainly gives the impression of being a 'serious' racer, with multiple sessions in a weekend and the kind of tuning options you'd expect if all your friends were spanners. It presents them really well, too – the camera swooping towards your rider in the back of the garage as he leans towards his mechanic for a chat. Sticking with the 3D bike when you're not racing, rather than dumping you into purely 2D

Info

Format PS3 ETA 26 Sep
Pub Black Bean Dev Milestone
Players 1-8 Web sbkthegame.com
It's like Racing half a car that steers really slowly and occasionally kills you.



Now we've made it look like it rains all the time in the game. It just feels like it does.

menus, is a brilliant move that helps keep you get drawn in. If only the rest of the game felt so polished.

To be fair, SBK-08 feels built down to a (stringent) price rather than unloved or uninspired. Get your head around the slow steering and fidgety over-corrections, and learn the stretched-out tracks, and you can have fun. Really nail it and your reward is a bike that bucks, weaves and howls in truly heroic style.

Get it wrong, though, and SBK-08 is cumbersome, plain and unrealistic... and far too much like SBK-07 for comfort.

Steve Williams



Release Schedule

Coming soon to a PlayStation near you

	Publisher	ETA	Format
Facebreaker	EA	5 Sep	PS3
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	EA	5 Sep	PS3
Monster Madness Grave Danger	South Peak	5 Sep	PS3
NHL 09	EA	12 Sep	Multi
Yakuza 2	Sega	12 Sep	PS2
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	Activision	19 Sep	PS3
Alone In The Dark	Atari	26 Sep	PS3
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	Ubisoft	26 Sep	PS3
Pure	Disney	26 Sep	PS3
Rise Of The Argonauts	Codemasters	26 Sep	PS3
SBK 08 Superbike WC	Black Bean	26 Sep	PS3
TNA Impact	Midway	26 Sep	PS3
FIFA 09	EA	3 Oct	Multi
NBA 2K9	Take Two	3 Oct	PS3
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	Rockstar	10 Oct	PS3
NBA Live 09	EA	10 Oct	Multi
Saints Row 2	THQ	17 Oct	PS3
Fallout 3	Bethesda	24 Oct	PS3
Dead Space	EA	31 Oct	PS3
Lego Batman	Warner Bros	31 Oct	PS3
Little Big Planet	Sony	31 Oct	PS3
Armored Core 4 Answers	Ubisoft	Oct	PS3
Fracture	Activision	Oct	PS3
Guitar Hero: World Tour	Activision	Oct	PS3
Silent Hill Homecoming	Konami	Oct	PS3
SOCOM Confrontation	Sony	Oct	PS3
Tom Clancy's Endwar	Ubisoft	Oct	PS3
Tomb Raider Underworld	Eidos	21 Nov	Multi
Far Cry 2	Ubisoft	Nov	PS3
Golden Axe: Beast Rider	Sega	Nov	PS3
Mirror's Edge	EA	Nov	PS3
Resistance 2	Sony	Nov	PS3
Tom Clancy's Hawk	Ubisoft	Nov	PS3
Valkyria Chronicles	Sega	Nov	PS3
Wipeout HD	Sony	Nov	PSN
WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2009	THQ	Nov	Multi
The Godfather II	EA	Feb 09	PS3
Killzone 2	Sony	Feb 09	PS3
Resident Evil 5	Capcom	Mar 09	PS3
Street Fighter IV	Capcom	Mar 09	PS3
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	THQ	Mar 09	PS3
Gran Turismo 5	Sony	2009	PS3
Prototype	Activision	2009	PS3

! All release dates are accurate at time of press but liable to change.



READY MADE EXCUSE #22

Pull a sickie for... Mirror's Edge

“Quite a lot of blood, yeah. It happened so fast. The police say I should make bail Friday unless the witness wakes up, so maybe see you then...”





▲ There are loads of events but the muscle car races are the most popular.

106



Info

Format PS3 **ETA**
Out now **Pub**
Codemasters **Dev**
Codemasters Racing
Studio **Players**
2-12 **Online Web**
codemasters.com/
grid **It's like** Formula
One, but stuff
actually happens.

Motorised mayhem

Race Driver Grid

Codies' brilliant track racer is a fragile beauty online

If you had any doubts whether Grid could maintain its electric pace and dicey racing online, your worries will disappear the second you hit the track in a multiplayer match. It doesn't lose much in the translation, and even the frighteningly quick vehicles at the top end of its garage are smooth and almost entirely lag-free. With 12-players in all, online track attacks are a parade of crumpled panels and powerslides, but most importantly, you can race closely with other players without the danger of warping and lag ruining your day. While GT5 Prologue's multiplayer races

are for the thinking (old) man, with the odd bit of gentlemanly jostling, Grid's are about badgering your opponent an inch from their rear bumper until they brake too late, and cackling as you sail past, rear tyres smoking, with their wreck of a car barrel rolling above your head.

Wacky races

Unfortunately, it seems that giving players a destructible environment to tool around in makes them go crash crazy. No big surprise there then. Countless times you'll find yourself drawing alongside an opponent on the final lap, only for them to attempt a Schumacher-style side-swipe to prevent you taking the position. Either that or you'll have already been taken out because half the field failed to brake in time for the first corner and decided to use you as a railway buffer.

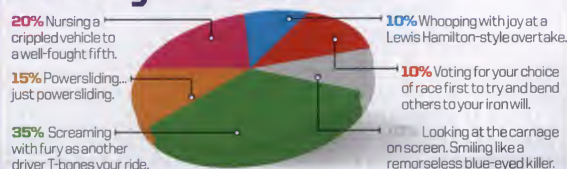
While Grid's replay mechanism successfully removes the frustration



▲ The Formula 1000 races are a stern challenge. The slightest knock destroys your delicate car.

of its exquisitely delicate damage modelling in single-player, for obvious reasons you're left without flashbacks in multiplayer races (just imagine your frustration if your classy overtake was rewound by your opponent). This means that terminal damage and a long wait until the next race with only some ADD-juiced adolescent for company becomes something of a recurring theme. It's not strictly the game's fault, but knowing that doesn't help you as your faith in humanity gently ebbs away.

What you do in... Grid





❑ Forget Burnout Paradise's fun multiplayer knockabouts, this is a serious racing challenge.

There are, at least, options for a private game. Organise it with a bunch of mates beforehand and you can set up a passworded room that's named after your PSN ID. Although there's no XMB invitation system, private sessions are easy to spot and will enable you to organise a clean race if a next-gen reincarnation of Destruction Derby isn't what you had planned.

Finishing straight

Interestingly, despite the antisocial vibe that's often found out on the track, car and circuit selection is a refreshingly democratic process. Rather than the host choosing a car they know inside out and a track that they've spent hundreds of laps memorising, votes are called after each three-event mini-championship. It does a great job of keeping you on your toes, and means if you're abysmal at a particular event, you shouldn't have to duck back into the lobby system to

search out another room (though drift session players rarely vote to race, and vice versa).

Ultimately, Grid can be loads of fun online, but bear in mind that it might take a while to find a bunch of opponents who'll race cleanly and fairly. Once you're in that elusive sweet spot, though, you'll find some top racing battles.

It's not just the core Grid experience that impresses either – structural touches such as those three-race championships, the ability to take your custom team colours from Grid World mode with you online, and even the option to attempt a two-hour version of the game's flagship Le Mans race elevate this above PS3's other multiplayer racers.

What's more, until the organisational nightmare that is GT5 Prologue's online structure is patched up to standard, Grid's likely to own the PS3 podium for some time. **Mike Channell**



Online round-up

With **Leon Hurley**



Maybe it's my broadband, which is weak like a Victorian child, but the majority of **Soulcalibur IV** matches play like fighting knee high in treacle sponge. You have to phone in every move half a second early, then pray it actually happens. Because sometimes it

won't. But luck out with a lag-free bout and the brilliance is obvious. Other points of interest: 1) It's massively satisfying beating an actual person, as opposed to the CPU. 2) It's fascinating/terrifying seeing what other people have cooked up using the character creation mode. 3) It's always awkward when my cheerleading pole-wielder has her skirt torn off to reveal crimson knick knacks.

The strangest thing about **Unreal**

Tournament III's intergalactic cock-waving contest is that it's actually pretty good fun. Oh, alright then, it's embarrassing. Hugely embarrassing. Girls in armoured bras, men with guns the size of fridges – the only people allowed to enjoy this sort of thing without a sense of irony are American douches called Chad. Or Ryan. But while it has all the depth of Starship Troopers 3, nothing says 'victory!' like watching opponents explode into clouds of meaty death marmalade when you hit them with a rocket launcher.



Puzzle games: good. Puzzle games where small bubbly ephalumps fall to their death in a rocky gorge: not so good. Especially when I'm making them fall in the online Jenga style matches. I can get past the fact that I see **Elefunk** playing out on

the inside of my eyelids when I try to sleep. I don't even mind that later levels are such an impossibly difficult mind hump that I end up keening in the corner like the Bad Lieutenant at my 15th failure. What's ruined it for me is the recurring image of a growing pile of dead, broken grey bodies piling on the floor of a canyon that might one day begin to peek over the bottom of my TV screen.

Download of the month

I like Sony's PSN music programme

Movement. Edgy European bands, exotic foreign travel in a cool, old, V-dub camper, and beautiful indie chicks with retro T-shirts and breathy accents – what's not to like? Even the idiot presenters are just about bearable, although they try so hard to be fun-loving goofs I find myself waiting for them to honk a horn and run off as a trombone goes "waaa-oooh-waaa!" What I can't understand, though, is why each half hour show is only downloadable in three-minute chunks. It's fine if you just want to grab the bands but if you want the whole programme you'll end up spending longer getting the show on to your PS3 than you will watching it.



mail@opm



This month: Club vs country, boxing stupid, the vice squad, filling the post-blockbuster void and why four is a magic number.

Managing expectations

Here's an idea for a PES 2009: what if you could have the option to manage international teams while managing in the Master League. You could do it by being offered a two-season contract to take, say, Denmark (you can't jump straight in with the big boys) to the Euros. Then qualifying takes place alongside your club campaign for two seasons, selecting your squad with each game, and if you manage to qualify you play the main tournament at the end of the second season. If you do well in that then

From PlayStation hopes and fears to technical queries, this is the place to come for answers

Email us at opm@futurenet.co.uk or write to Letters, OPM, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

you'll have the option to take them to the World Cup, or if you do exceptionally well for club and country, one of the better nations might offer you a contract. I think this feature would come into its own the longer you play it, with players improving and deteriorating as the seasons pass. It's the ultimate challenge!

James McEvoy, by email

And if you select England all the formation options except 4-4-2 are greyed out, the players' stats drop by 50 points during international matches and Konami sends over a private detective to root through your bins on behalf of the tabloids.

★ Spoof spy

Me and my friend have been Metal Gear Solid fans for a long time, so while waiting for the release of MGS4, I dug a cardboard box out of the attic and we went to our local Focus DIY store and spoofed Snake's sneaking. Unfortunately, I wasn't very good at not being seen and the guards activated alert status, resulting in us being thrown out, so we then went through town instead. We filmed it so you can watch it at youtube.com/watch?v=3DBYgEdmSPM.

Kieron Moore, by email



✓ Fancy managing in the South 'Super Classico'?

✓ Kieron found himself an OPM subscription in his cardboard box.



Well done, you score yourself a year's subscription to the magazine. But did the video really need to last nine minutes? Or was the length a post-modern nod to Kojima's inability to edit himself? Oh, and if anyone fancies recreating the climax of Siren Blood Curse in Homebase next Sunday while we're picking out bathroom tiles we'd really appreciate it.

Hard Boll

Uwe Boll is the man to blame for many bad videogame films, and I've heard he plans to make a GTA adaptation. Bad idea! Can you imagine the carnage he'd cause and how much he'd damage the reputation of one of the most iconic game series in the world? There is a petition to stop him making films on the internet, and if it reaches a million Boll retires forever!

Please sign it OPM, it's online at petitiononline.com/mod_perl/signed.cgi?RRH53888. He's damaging the reputations of many brilliant games. It's just sad that no one as of yet has the ingenuity to create a masterpiece. I'm hoping to God that the Prince Of Persia and Max Payne adaptations break the trend, as they're two of my favourite series. Fingers crossed.

William Allen, by email

What's on my hard drive



Nim Deonarain, London

Music

A lot of my favourite bands such as Linkin Park and Slipknot – great for when I'm surfing the net on my PS3.

Photo

Lots of photos from my phone of me and my mates.

Video

Some homemade videos done with my friends... a bit like Jackass.

Game

I'm playing GTA IV and Oblivion right now, and the Iron Man demo.

Friends

I have all my best mates online! Plus some random people from COD4 and GTA IV matches.

Tell us what's on your hard drive! Email us at opm@futurenet.co.uk

1) Rockstar would no more let Uwe Boll near GTA than let jackals babysit their children. 2) Boll has already said he won't retire even if a million people on the internet want him to. 3) If either the Persia or Payne movie is good we'll eat our There Will Be Blood Blu-ray washed down with an oil milkshake.

GTA V

Yes! Vice City is one place that would make sense for the next GTA, just like GTA IV and Liberty City. How can there be anywhere else for the next GTA instalment? It was Christmas when my brother and I received our PS2 and a copy of Vice City. What a game! Even Ken Rosenberg was loveable. We'd progressed to the missions for Colonel Cortez and even that felt like an achievement, so we kept the PS2 running until we'd saved the £20 to get a memory card. The game flew by. Beating the crap out of that chef in the beginning has to be the best beating I've ever dished out in any GTA! But only one thing made Vice City what it was, and it was the setting. The climate, the architecture and the beaches felt so right. I sincerely hope Rockstar brings back those memories in some way, shape or form – they should remake Vice like they did Liberty, but with an even badder hero than Tommy. It's the only place that makes sense for any GTA-infatuated fan.

Tom White, by email


Doesn't it seem a bit *too* obvious, though? Also, are there really enough jokes left to wring out of the '80s? We reckon Rockstar North will want to switch it up more dramatically for the sequel. Setting aside, how about the first female protagonist? Or, better still, a two-player co-op mode in which you both play corrupt cops like Vic and Shane in *The Shield*?

Finishing moves

Had to email you and share my problem. I've finished GTA IV, I've just this minute finished MGS4, and now I have no idea what to do with myself. Don't get me wrong, I'm excited about Killzone 2 and Fallout 3 and Little Big Planet, but right now I can't find anything else I want to play. There are some good games around right now, I'm not saying they all suck, I'm just saying none of them are quite as epic as MGS or GTA. It's like trying to watch Eastenders after a



Super Stardust HD – the crown jewel of PSN games.



Ask SONY

Q How will multiplayer classes in *Killzone 2* work?

A Instead of a rigid class system, the online mode enables you to mix abilities from different roles to suit your style. Abilities are represented by badges: the primary badge defines your main role and appearance, while the secondary lets you access a support ability.

Fourth time is the charm for DMC.



Tarantino marathon. I need to know if there are some hidden gems that can help me fill the void. Please OPM, you're my only hope.

Timmy Shipp, by email

Soulcalibur IV is absolutely essential – and beyond that how about sampling some of the magic on the PlayStation Store? Team favourites are *Super Stardust HD*, *Elefunk*, *Echochrome* and *Siren Blood Curse* – all of which have demos so you can try before you buy.

Four play

I was playing *Grand Theft Auto IV* the other day, when I came upon a thought about the number four. You have given four games a 10/10 so far. They are *Grand Theft Auto IV*, *Call Of Duty 4*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, and *The Elder Scrolls IV*. Apparently, the best game on PS2 for a majority of people is *Resident Evil 4*. *Guitar Hero IV* is supposed to be a revolution in the series because of the addition of drums, microphone and bass. The PS3 is Sony's fourth major console, the first three being PS1, PS2 and PSP. *Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth* is the fourth WWE game by THQ and a lot of people believe that to be the best WWE game to date. Is there some kind of conspiracy going on here? Is the number four destined to be gaming's lucky number? Well I don't know about you, but it's become my lucky number.

Danny Scott, by email

Devil May Cry 4 was really strong too, but the rule collapses when you come to the disastrous *Time Crisis 4*. "Okay people, we need some ideas for new enemies... *Anyone?* No? Okay, it looks like we're going with the swarms of nanobeetles then, doesn't it?"

Off the Wall



Choice cuts from the OPM Facebook group



Wild life

"But wait! If you're here, who's grooming the badgers for the Badger Parade?"

Iain Wilson



PSP party

"In your face geek lord, bow down before my LCD widescreen!"

Kenneth Talbot



Button blisters

"Any game that causes physical pain is a big 'NO' for me..."

John Cole



New nicknames

"I say whenever we refer to Tim we say Old Clark! All gamers will now want 'Old' in front of their name, thanks to Snake making the 'gramps' scene cool again."

Rob Sewell



Fowl play

"There are plenty of things more dangerous than implosions or explosions... ducks for example."

Matt Brown



Lower class

"Buzz in schools sounds like an amazing idea! But within a few days it would get nicked by some chav."

Laura Varley



Finish him

"I want to rip out Superman's spine and hit him with it."

Alex Duhig

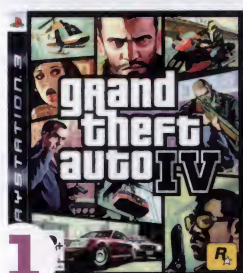
Send your questions to:
opm@futurenet.co.uk



PS3

Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games so far



1

Action

Grand Theft Auto IV

It's everything you love about GTA – the twisted characters, epic missions and savage humour – polished to perfection. A true modern masterpiece.

10 Pub Rockstar Games
Dev Rockstar North



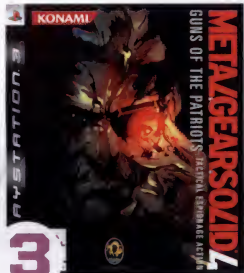
2

Shooter

Call Of Duty 4 Modern Warfare

Take on terrorists as the SAS and US Marines as Call Of Duty dumps WW2 for a contemporary setting. This is a beautiful, brutal and near flawless shooter.

10 Pub Activision
Dev Infinity Ward



3

Stealth

Metal Gear Solid 4 Guns Of The Patriots

A typically esoteric but masterful end to Snake's saga, blending beautifully immersive action with a lifetime's worth of cut-scenes. Divisive but essential.

10 Pub Konami
Dev Konami Productions



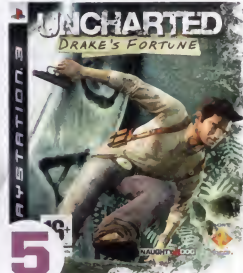
4

RPG

Oblivion Game Of The Year Edition

An adventure so vast and all-consuming you'll lose months to its quests and battles. Now with the Knights Of The Nine and Shivering Isles expansion packs.

10 Pub Ubisoft
Dev Bethesda Softworks



5

Action-Adventure

Uncharted Drake's Fortune

Treasure hunter Nathan Drake is after the fabled gold of El Dorado in this superb blend of action and puzzles. Think Gears Of War meets Tomb Raider. Then buy.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Naughty Dog



6

Platformer

Ratchet & Clank Tools Of Destruction

Platforming royalty return to save the galaxy. Exquisite graphics and a riotous arsenal of comedy weapons make this the pair's best interstellar outing yet.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Insomniac Games



7

Racer

Race Driver Grid

Straight from the TOCA garage and into first place. It's the smooth mechanics, aggressive races and fine tuned cars that make this the best racer currently on PS3.

9 Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters



8

Music

SingStar

Sony's much-loved karaoke game steps up to next-gen with a neater interface, online options and tons of tunes via SingStore. Outkast's Hey Ya and Killers' Mr Brightside are highlights.

9 Pub Sony
Dev SCE Studios London



9

Multplayer Combat

Warhawk

Endless dogfighting fun and the best multiplayer currently available on PS3. Up to 32 players can battle on massive maps with a wealth of weapons, plus ground and air vehicles.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Incog Inc



10

Fighter

Soulcalibur IV

Darth Vader aside, this is essential stuff. The swordplay is as accessible and strong as ever, with deep character customisation and online play completing the package.

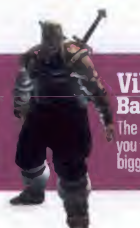
9 Pub Ubisoft
Dev Namco

PS3 Armies



Overlord Raising Hell

Spawn battalions of minions to ravage local villages, scare livestock and impress chicks.



Viking Battle For Asgard

The more mead-soaked ruffians you rescue from the undead, the bigger your army will be.



Civilization Revolution

Play as leaders like Napoleon or Cleopatra, squandering whole armies in a quest for domination.



Brothers in Arms Hell's Highway

Let your platoon take on the Nazis while you shout commands from a despicably safe distance.



PSP

Essential collection

Ten indispensable games for your handheld – try them or buy them, just make sure you play them



1

Action-Adventure
God Of War
Chains Of Olympus

Bloody, god-slaying prequel that matches the PS2 games' vibrant visuals and frantic hack and slash action.

10 **Pub Sony**
Dev Ready At Dawn



2

Strategy
Final Fantasy Tactics
The War Of Lions

A genuinely gripping plot, delicious-looking visuals and the oceanic 'job' system make this the best Fantasy so far.

10 **Pub Square Enix**
Dev Square Enix



3

Platformer
LocoRoco

Tilt a 2D world to guide a growing, smiley-faced blob to safety while sugary Japan-o-pop tickles your ears. Rolls all over Me & My Katamari.

10 **Pub Sony**
Dev SCE Studios Japan



4

Free-Roaming
Grand Theft Auto
Vice City Stories

Everything you'd expect from GTA, only smaller. Compelling missions on foot or behind the wheel, plus plenty of '80s tunes.

10 **Pub Rockstar**
Dev Rockstar Leeds



5

Puzzler
Lumines II

Move blocks and clear the screen to a brilliantly eclectic soundtrack. New features and modes improve an addictive fusion of music and puzzling.

9 **Pub Buena Vista**
Dev Q Entertainment



6

Rhythm
Patapon

Scrolling 2D battles with a side order of crazy. Control your army of eyeballs with different drum beats, taking on rival tribes and huge monochrome monsters.

9 **Pub Sony**
Dev Pyramid/Interlink



7

Fighter
Tekken
Dark Resurrection

With stunning looks, loads of mini-games and new moves, this offers some of the best multiplayer action on PSP.

9 **Pub Sony**
Dev Namco

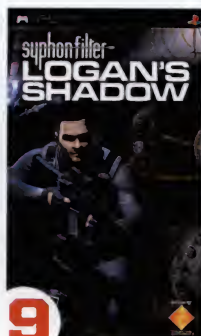


8

Platformer
Ratchet & Clank
Size Matters

The duo's handheld debut is a platforming riot. Uproarious weapons and compelling levels make this a must-have hit.

9 **Pub Sony**
Dev High Impact Games



9

Stealth-Strategy
Syphon Filter
Logan's Shadow

A top-class stealth sequel. Gabe returns with new weapons, new moves and the news that his partner could be a double agent.

9 **Pub Sony**
Dev Sony Bend



10

Racer
Ridge Racer

Powerslide around a mix of classic and new tracks. A great arcade racer where teasing out a drift while taking a corner at 135mph never gets dull.

9 **Pub Namco**
Dev Namco



111

PSP
Horror



Castlevania
Dracula X Chronicles

Life-suckingly difficult platforming with a retro flavour as you stalk vampires through gothic 2D levels.



Infected

There's a nasty, zombie-birthing bug going around, and your super immune blood is the only cure. "Oh go on then, but just a sip..."



Silent Hill Origins

Fight twisted, fleshbag monsters and murderous nurses to discover the history of gaming's least appealing holiday destination.



Dead Head Fred

Our headless hero has to discover what happened to his missing bonce, collecting craniums along the way.

Hi-Def Directory

Ensure your PS3 games and Blu-ray movies look their best with a lovely new HDTV. Go on, you deserve it...

Plasma Best buys



NEW
£553*
Panasonic TH-37PX80B
Unusual to describe anything north of 500 sheets as incredible value – but this is, and if you're serious about HD it's a perfect way to get involved. Not 1080p, but at this size you won't notice, and for our money the picture quality shames its LCD rivals.
Size 37" Native resolution 1,024 x 720 1080p No
Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 1xS-Video, 2xSCART, 1xPC Input, Freeview



NEW
£1,027
Panasonic TH-42PZ80B
Just a couple of years back you'd have been paying three large for a plasma this big, and without the ace picture Panasonic is now serving up. Best of all, it features built-in Freesat so you can watch HD content from the BBC and ITV.
Size 42" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes
Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 1xS-Video, 2xSCART, 1xPC Input, Freesat



NEW
£2,397
Pioneer PDP-LX5090
We love Pio plasmas like Jesus loves sinners, and the Japanese firm's ninth-gen panel shames other HDTVs with its obsidian black levels, rich colours and sumptuous motion handling. Seriously, that Post Office *wants* to be robbed.
Size 50" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes
Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xS-Video, 3xSCART, 1xPC Input, 1xUSB input

LCD Best buys



NEW
£655
Sony KDL32W4000
There are cheaper sets available for less money and at bigger sizes, but this entry level Bravia won't be beaten on picture quality, and gives you the satisfaction of having all your kit Sony-badged. Even the menus are based on PS3's XMB.
Size 32" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes
Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 2xSCART, 1xS-video, 1xPC Input, 1xUSB input, Freeview



NEW
£759
Samsung LE40A656
Sammy remain impressive players on the LCD scene, and this mid-range set combines bold design (loving the rose-tinted finish) with deep blacks and confident motion-handling. Plus, 4 HDMI sockets means the future is your friend.
Size 40" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes
Connections 4xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 2xSCART, 1xS-video, 1xPC Input, Freeview



NEW
£1,899
Sony KDL-52W4000
Desperate to give Uncle Sony some more shiny dollars? This superb Bravia will enrage your other half with its imperial-sized proportions, but at least you can claim the frame looks elegant. That's right, enormous *and* elegant.
Size 52" Native resolution 1,920 x 1,080 1080p Yes
Connections 3xHDMI, 1xComponent, 1xComposite, 2xSCART, 1xPC Input, 1xUSB input, Freeview

Essential Blu-ray movies



The Orphanage
Spanish thriller set in a Victorian orphanage, Mexican death-mask children and nasty shocks make for a brilliantly spooky atmosphere.



Ratatouille
The digital source material means Pixar's latest is a show-stopping looker. It's about a Parisian rat who wants to make it as a chef.



Juno
Warm but emotionally wrought comedy about a smart-mouthed teenager who falls pregnant with her goofy bandmate. Loveliness ensues.

FAQ

Do I need an HDTV to play PS3?

Simple answer: no. You can connect your PS3 to almost any standard definition TV using the composite lead supplied with the console. Do yourself a favour, though, and upgrade to a superior RGB SCART lead. However, to see PS3 games in all their glory, we massively recommend getting an HDTV. Don't even consider buying a flatscreen without the 'HD ready' badge, because it ensures you'll get the right sockets to hook up in hi-def.

How does PS3 look on a normal TV?

Even in standard definition, the jump from PS2 to PS3 impresses. You were happy with how your PS2 looked through SCART on a normal TV, right? Assuming you're using the same set-up, PS3 games are going to look that much better because the machine is so much more powerful. More problematic is playing old games on an HDTV, because they have a lower resolution and the image therefore has to be upscaled and processed. The end result can be a smeared, blurry picture.

720p/1080i/1080p... WTF does it all mean?

These are the different flavours of hi-def signal. The numbers refer to the amount of horizontal lines in the picture; the more lines there are, the higher the detail. As for the letters, 'p' means a progressively scanned image, which is more stable and smooth because each frame is drawn in its entirety, whereas 'i' is an interlaced signal that rapidly switches between the odd and even horizontal lines of an image, giving the impression of a full frame. Roughly speaking, 720p is best for fast motion but 1080i suits more static, detailed visuals with 1080p therefore being the best of both worlds and ultimate daddy.

Do I need a 1080p compatible set?

It's certainly not essential. At present, only top-end HDTVs are capable of displaying 1080p, and games that support the signal, such as Ridge Racer 7 and Virtua Tennis 3, are in the minority – but as time goes by that will change. However, there's an argument to say that for anything less than super-sized screens (say, below 46") the difference between 720p and 1080p is actually pretty negligible – and certainly nowhere near the quantum shift you get going from standard to hi-def.

Should I buy an LCD or plasma?

The variation in quality between models and manufacturers means there's no easy answer. LCD screens tend to have higher resolutions (good news if you're after 1080p), are lightweight and cost less at



larger screen sizes. However, the blacks can look slightly washed out and some LCD panels struggle with fast motion. Plasma, contrastingly, deals with motion confidently and delivers rich black and vibrant colours – but the sets are chunkier and guzzle power. There's also a slight risk of screen burn, when on-screen information (such as an energy bar) remains as an afterimage, although the problem isn't usually permanent. Forced to choose? We'd probably plump for a 42" Pioneer or Panasonic plasma. But if you're paying we'll have a 46" Bravia X-series LCD.

How big should my TV be?

Big is always best. You also need to consider the size of your room and budget, though. The size of flat-panel screens mean you'll want to sit further back than you did with your old TV. As a rough measurement, multiply the diagonal size of the screen by three and it will give you an idea of how far away to plonk the La-Z-Boy. So for a 42" screen you should sit it about 10ft back.

How do I make my PS3 run hi-def?

Connect any HDMI cable between your PS3 and your HDTV and the console will automatically recognise it and ask if you want to display hi-def. Say yes, obviously. It should also check the maximum resolution your panel supports, but this can also be tweaked in the display settings menu on the XMB. If you're connecting via Component you'll also need to go into the same menu and select that option under Display Settings, after which you'll be asked to choose which HD resolution to use.

Help, the screen has gone blank!

Assuming everything's on and all the leads are connected, you've probably selected the wrong resolution. Switch the unit to standby and then turn it on by holding the power button for five seconds until you hear a bleep. If an HDMI lead's plugged in the PS3 will detect it. Otherwise it'll revert to the standard AV output using a composite lead.

Getting connected

You've got the hardware, now hook it all up

HDMI

Transmits hi-def video and audio as a pure digital signal – the best possible connection. These don't come with PS3 and will set you back around £20.



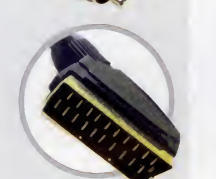
Component

These cables deliver an analogue signal capable of carrying hi-def video. Three separate wires are used for the red, green and blue picture information.



RGB/SCART

This is used for the standard audiovisual connection. It's analogue-only, but provides a crisp and clear picture that will serve you well. It won't deliver that hi-def crispness though.



S-Video

This splits the analogue video signal into chrominance (colour) and luminance (light), resulting in a better picture compared with a standard composite lead.



Composite

Bog-standard analogue signal. Picture quality is fuzzy and prone to colour bleed. It's also the lead you get in the PS3 box. Cheers! Do yourself a favour: upgrade immediately.

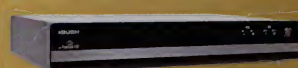


Optical

This is a laser-powered, audio-only connection used to send digital sound to your TV or home cinema amp for deep bass and crystal-clear effects.



HD choice



Bush BFSAT01HD Freesat box

The digital set top box that, partnered with a Freesat dish, provides easy access to the free satellite services from BBC and ITV, including HD broadcasts. No subscription required.

Price £120 Channels 80+ stockist.argos.co.uk

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There Will Be Blood

A huge performance from Daniel Day-Lewis anchors this dark, unsettling oil epic. Large on ideas, small on sentiment, and beautiful to look at.



Blade Runner: Final Cut

Tech-noir thriller with Harrison Ford hunting down robot people in a neon-bathed future L.A.



The Prestige

Blu-ray lights up the sumptuous Victorian setting of this smart thriller about two magicians locked in a deadly rivalry.



Batman Begins

Grim franchise reboot with a darker, more realistic edge, as Batman is reshaped into a muscular, menacing hero.

Carl 'CJ' Johnson

#19
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GTA: San Andreas' family man

More chatty than Claude, less crazy than Tommy, not quite as revenge-driven as Niko – CJ is officially GTA's nicest protagonist. He's only back in town because his mum's dead, and when he needs to whack friends – which happens surprisingly often – he does it with a genuine pang of remorse and a sad word. Of course, it takes away some of the poignancy when he weighs 300lbs and is wearing only a bandana and a pair of heart-spangled boxer shorts... but that's Rockstar's fault for letting us dress him up.

Career highlights

Flying The Hydra

Realism? Tchah. Before GTA IV came along with its big ideas about keeping things grounded and sane, a typical mission involved CJ stealing a military jet to destroy a flotilla of spyships, then getting into an aerial dogfight with a brace of F-15s.



Assault by parachute

When attacking a fortified mansion, standard protocol is to look for chinks in the fence, and sneak in. Not CJ – when he takes Madd Dogg's mansion from Big Poppa, he skydives in on a pink parachute and kills anyone who dares to shoot back.



(Not) Whacking Tenpenny

Every GTA has an enemy who slips away, but few are more loathsome than crooked cop Tenpenny. So when he dies in a riot, it's natural that CJ wants to make sure he's dead... but beautiful that big bro Sweet steps in to take the gun away.



The swim king

CJ was the first GTA character able to survive in the wet, and swimming to the other islands before you've unlocked them is a delightful way to rile up the pigs. You can even dive deep underwater to find oysters to improve your sex appeal.



Who to trust?



Sean 'Sweet' Johnson

Carl's older brother and head of the Grove Street Families, Sweet blames CJ for their little brother Brian's death.



Melvin 'Big Smoke' Harris

A long-time family friend of the Grove, but not above operating his own drug rackets for extra dollar, Smoke's not to be trusted.



Lance 'Ryder' Wilson

Short, wiry and angry. With the shades and hat, Ryder's almost the spitting image of NWA nutcase Eazy-E. He's in it for the cash, just like Big Smoke.



Cesar Vialpando

Childhood friend Cesar's dating CJ's sister, and heads up the Varios Los Aztecas. Loves CJ, and doesn't even mind him taking his cousin Catalina.

Would like to meet

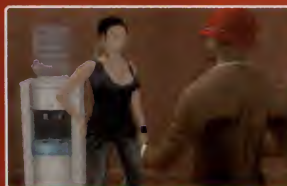
Catalina

Cesar's cousin lives in an isolated hut in Fern Ridge, with freshly dug graves in the backyard. Obsessed with robbery – and Carl – she eventually tires of his lack of attention and runs off with Claude. The GTA III bloke? Speed. Probably for the best.



Michelle

A mechanic who likes fat guys – it's best to ask her out after a few hefty sessions down at the Cluckin' Bell – nice haircuts, cars and driving really fast. If she likes you enough, she'll give you a racing driver's set of overalls.



Millie

The Croupier at Caligula's casino in Las Venturas is available at 12:00pm sharp every day after the Key To The Heart mission, and dating her gets you an, erm, experimental leather outfit. She also likes it if you take toys on dates.



CJ trivia



50 Cent was originally tipped to voice CJ but was beat out by upcoming hip-hop artist Young Maylay. Fiddy went on to make his own (terrible) game instead.



Young Maylay cashed in on the game's popularity by releasing a CD called San Andreas: The Original Mixtape.



Many forumites claim that an apparition occasionally seen on the stairs in CJ's house is the ghost of his mum, but Rockstar refuses to confirm this.



Samuel L. Jackson, who voiced CJ's nemesis Tenpenny, later complained that the motion capture on his character was 'horrible'.



Contrary to rumours of his death, CJ pops up in GTA IV on CNT TV show 'I'm Rich', flying an enormous Tartan parachute. Yeah!

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